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SERMONS

AND

SKETCHES OF SERMONS.

BY THE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

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SERMONS.

Sermon I.—*Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones.*

Preached in Albion-street Chapel, Leeds, at the formation of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District, October 6, 1813.

"Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," Ezekiel xxxvii, 9.

History acquaints us with the past, and our faculties of observation spread before us the scenes of present time; and these, in the usual course of things, are the only sources of information which are open to man. But it has pleased God, in this book of revelation, to give us access to a third, and to spread the view into the future: not only to enlarge the sphere of knowledge behind us and on each side; but before us, and to "show to his servants what shall be hereafter."

This is done by prophecy,—a large and important part of the sacred volume, which stands, not only as an illustrious demonstration of the prescience of its Author, but a proof of his goodness to us; for our improvement and happiness are thereby equally promoted. An ancient writer remarks, that he who is acquainted with the history of past ages lives twice. With equal truth may it be affirmed, that he whose mind is also enlightened with the views of holy writ lives thrice. His existence is extended beyond its natural bounds, and he is present to future events, the highest and most interesting in the economy of Divine Providence.

We are not, however, to suppose that our view of the future, even after the most attentive study of the prophetical books, will be perfectly distinct and satisfactory. There is a moral necessity that prophecy should be surrounded with a certain haze and indistinctness. Man is to be the instrument of executing the decrees of Heaven; and it is a principle of the Divine government to offer no violence to his moral agency, and a peculiar glory of infinite wisdom to accomplish its purposes by his free volitions. It seems, therefore to be a mistake in many persons to expect to ascertain the exact times and manner in which the predictions of Heaven will be accomplished. Time is the grand expounder of prophecy; and as far as relates to particulars, perhaps time alone. The value of prophecy is not, however, on this account diminished. In this partial form it fully answers the design of God, by supporting the confidence of good men in the ultimate triumphs of their religion, in quickening their exertions, and relieving their anxieties. The outline, the bolder features of the grand plan of the Divine government present so many enlightened points in the darkness of futurity, though the minuter parts retire into shades of various depth. In the vista thus opened into distant ages we perceive truth and righteousness, after long and painful struggles, finally triumphing

discord subsiding into peace; and a long-rejected Saviour effectually asserting his rights, and bending the world to his dominion in mercy.

The words of the text are connected with a well-known prophecy respecting the restoration of Israel under the sublime idea of the resurrection of the dry bones of a host of dead. If the prediction referred at all to the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, it could only be in a very low sense. The terms in which it is expressed plainly indicate an event more glorious in its accomplishment, more permanent in its effects, and more spiritual in its nature. It connects itself with the glory of the latter day. The Jews are now the dry bones in the valley, and their conversion to Christ will be their resurrection. On this principal application of the prophecy we shall not now dwell. Apostasy from God, whether in Jew or Gentile, is followed substantially by the same consequences; the methods of Divine grace in recovering men from ruin are, in all climes and ages, usually the same; and we shall therefore consider the prophecy,

I. As affording us a striking description of the religious state of the heathen world.

II. As directing to the means to be made use of to effect its mystical resurrection.

III. As marking the certain success of its application.

I. 1. The persons made the subject of this prophetic vision are represented as *dead*. The prophet is led by the Spirit to a valley filled with the dishonored relics of the dead. To be dead is to be in a state which excites regret and sympathy. Who can refrain a sigh when the noble human fabric is stretched with the clods of the valley, and the warm pulse of life subsides into the coldness and corruption of death? But a deeper death is here contemplated,—the death of souls. The spirit is here invaded by the destroyer, and the higher part of our nature falls the victim. In this, however, we speak morally. The immortal spirit cannot die; but as in the death of the body, the matter of which it is composed is not annihilated, though the parts are dissolved, so in the moral death of souls the spirit exists, but it exists disorganized and corrupted. In Scripture language, to be without knowledge is to be dead; because it is knowledge which gives activity to the powers of the mind. To lose the image of God is to die; because as death destroys the human form, sin destroys truth, holiness, and love, in which the image of God in man consists. This is the unhappy case of the heathen. They have turned the "truth of God into a lie;" their religious opinions are composed of absurd fables; and the principles of morality being left without support, have been all borne down by the tide of sensual appetite and ungoverned passion. Ignorance the most profound, imagination the most extravagant, and crimes the most daring, have ever characterized "the world which lies in" the power of "the wicked one." But though all this be awfully true, it is not on these circumstances that we would principally fix our attention. There is another and more alarming truth to be told. The heathen world is *judicially dead*, under the wrath and curse of almighty God. The law which they have violated turns the edge of the sword of justice against them; the conscience which they have abused renders them miserable in their crimes; and as death expels their myriads from this state of being, they appear before that God of judgment who

hath said, "The abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, shall have their part in the burning lake, which is the second death."

Were these solemn truths well fixed in our minds, they would stand in the place of a volume of argument to induce us to support missionary institutions. They would burst at once the bands of selfishness, and "draw out our souls" to them who are perishing for lack of knowledge. The contemplation of the imminent danger of so great a portion of our fellow men would melt at once the frigidness of our natures, and cause our affections to flow forth in strong prayers, and still stronger exertions, in behalf of our brethren in distant lands, who have "forgotten the God of their salvation, and have not been mindful of the rock of their strength."

To counteract these generous feelings, and to stop the stream of pity in its very fountain, we are aware that the doctrine of the safety of the heathen has been confidently affirmed; and perhaps we also have too often slumbered over our duty, lulled by the drone of that doating and toothless theology which treats sin with the cruel tenderness of an Eli to his sons, and employs itself rather in drawing extravagant pictures of the mercy of God, than in supporting the just rights of his government. Resting in plausible general principles, which are never pursued to their consequences, there are many who appear to consider the Divine Being under some obligation of justice to throw open the gates of salvation to the whole world of polluted heathen; thus making vice a kind of passport to heaven, and ignorance a better security for the eternal happiness of men than the full display of the glorious doctrines and the impressive motives of our religion. The true question is among such persons often mistaken. It is not, whether it is possible for heathens to be saved,—that we grant: but that circumstance proves the actual state of the heathen world to be more dangerous than if no such possibility could be proved; for the possibility of their salvation indisputably shows them to be the subjects of moral government, and therefore liable to an aggravated punishment in case of disobedience. The true question is, Are the heathens, immoral and idolatrous as they are, actually safe? On this solemn subject we are not left to the decisions of human authority. Inspiration itself has decided it; and when human opinions and Divine revelation come into opposition, you will not hesitate to say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The reasoning of St. Paul, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is of universal application; it bears no mark of particularity, and there is nothing in the state of the heathen of our day to render it less applicable to them than to the heathen of his own. His conclusion is, that for all their crimes and idolatries "they are without excuse." They are ignorant; but it is because they "do not like to retain God in their knowledge." They have a "law written on their hearts;" but they violate it. They have a conscience which "accuses or excuses them;" but they disregard it, and "therefore they are without excuse." This is the conclusion of an infallible teacher, against which it is vain to reason; and from this it follows that, if the fact of general and perhaps universal depravity of principle and action among the heathens be proved, then another conclusion of the apostle must follow of course, "that the wrath of God is revealed

from heaven" against them; that the valley is full of souls, dead to God, and under the sentence of an everlasting condemnation.

2. But this is not the only melancholy view which the subject exhibits. The number of the dead forms another part of the picture,—"the valley was full of bones." The prophet "passed by, round about;" he viewed the dreary scene with attention; and, "behold, there were very many." Such, brethren, is the picture which the world presents to our view. The slain of sin are innumerable. The valley as we trace it seems to sweep to an unlimited extent, and yet every where it is full! The whole earth is that valley. Where is the country where transgression stalks not with daring and destructive activity? where it has not covered and polluted the soil with its victims? In some places, it is true, we behold "the few who are saved;" but in many large and crowded nations we should look even for that few in vain; and the words of the psalmist might, after the most charitable investigation, prove even literally applicable, "They are all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Let us pass over Europe, whose population bears but a small proportion to that of the globe, though there chiefly the Christian name is known. Let us not even stop to inquire how many bones lie unburied and dry in that valley; or, if in many instances bone has been united to bone, in the profession of true religion, of how many the prophet would still say, "There is no breath" of vital religion "in them." Let us take our post of observation elsewhere. If we turn to the east, there the peopled valleys of Asia stretch before us; but peopled with whom? With the dead! That quarter of the earth alone presents five hundred millions of souls, with but few exceptions, without a God, save gods that sanction vice; without a sacrifice, save sacrifices of folly and blood; without a priest, except a race of jugglers, impostors, and murderers; without holy days, except such as debase by their levity, corrupt by their sensuality, or harden by their cruelty. With a little difference as to religious rites, the same description is applicable to the thirty millions of the race of Ham, and to the aborigines of the continent and islands of the new world. This view, it is true, is somewhat relieved by a few rays of light shining here and there amid the gloom; by the cheering sight of a few prophets of the Lord sent forth by the piety of Christians, prophesying to the dry bones, and surrounded by a few living men, the fruits of their mission. But however hopeful this gleam of success is, the affecting fact is, the valley is still full of dead. It is only in a few places on its verge that the prophets of the Lord are seen; only within a small compass that their voice is heard. On the rest of the valley the gloom of despair settles, and sin and death hold undisturbed dominion. No sound of salvation breaks the horrid silence, and no "shaking is heard among the bones."

3. To the number of the dead the prophet adds another circumstance, —"they were unburied:" the destructive effects of sin, the sad ravages of death, lay exposed and open to the sun. So open and exposed have been the unbelief and blasphemies of the Jews, and the idolatry and vices of the Gentiles. We need not dig up the earth to discover the dead: they strew the surface of the ground. This representation strongly marks the dreadful maturity of sin among apostate nations, and the absence of all those checks which in countries better instructed

restrain those evils which are not wholly cured. A great moralist has truly observed, that "where there is shame there may be virtue."—What, then, shall we say where there is no shame? The habits of sin are confirmed, and all virtue is extinct. The pagan world did not, however, arrive at this maturity of vice all at once. Its idolatrous and vicious propensities had to contend with the restraints of remaining truth and goodness probably for many ages. Thus we read in the book of Job, that, notwithstanding the tendency to polytheism in his day, some upright magistrates remained, who punished idolatry by law, justly considering it as a crime against civil society, involving, as it ever has done, the practice of the worst vices, as well as against Heaven. "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand, this were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above." The influence of truth, even without the aid of the civil magistrate, and though existing in but small remains, to check this degrading and offensive propensity, is also strikingly expressed in a part of the book from which our text is taken. Ezekiel was conducted in vision into a "secret chamber," where "the ancients of the house of Israel" stood "in the dark" before their idols and abominable portraitures, and burned incense to them. The blush of shame still reddened on their cheek, and they performed their abominations "in the dark." Vice shrinks in the presence of purity; the works of darkness hate the light; and this affords a powerful motive to our endeavours to introduce the Gospel into idolatrous countries.—Reproof will, again, excite shame, shame will lead to secrecy, and secrecy of practice will ultimately give place to reformation. At present, however, such restraints do not exist. They have long since been borne down, and error and vice, long triumphant, have grown too bold for privacy. Yes; for ages the dead have lain unburied, presenting nothing but stench and corruption to the pure heavens above them.—They have "worshipped devils," and hallowed crimes, and have not been ashamed. In one place a painted idol usurps the honours of "God, blessed for ever;" and in another the obscene prophet is revered as a Divine messenger. Every where they have refused "to retain God in their knowledge;" they have been "given up to vile affections;" and have reached that climax of all iniquity, not only to do "such things" themselves, but to "take pleasure in them that do them."

4. The prophet closes his description of the state of the dead, by adding, that "the bones were very dry." Under this strong figure the hopelessness of their condition is represented. Thus the Jews, introduced in verse 11, are made to say, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost;" and the state of the heathen must, at least, be equally hopeless. As far as mere human means and human probabilities go, "there is no hope." From themselves it is certain there is none. They have wandered too far to find the fold again; and what renders their case still more desperate is, they have no inclination to seek it. It is the nature of sin to infatuate as well as to corrupt; and to pervert, that it may destroy. "They put darkness for light, light for darkness, good for evil, and evil for good;" and "how then shall they be healed?"—If, however, absolutely speaking, there were no hope of their recovery,

our exertions would be superfluous, and our meeting on the present occasion absurd. There is hope, not from man, but from God. Nevertheless, we feel no inclination to conceal the difficulties which lie in the way of that great work which we are met this day to promote.—The "bones are dry, very dry." Superstition is a power of almost incalculable energy. It grasps both the hopes and fears of our nature; and has its principal seat in the imagination,—a power of the mind the most difficult to purge, when polluted, and to discipline, when it has obtained the mastery. If, therefore, the Gospel again prevail, it must again "cast down high imaginations," and break up inveterate habits of sin. As of old, interest, and pleasure, and power, will be arrayed against it; and "the kings and judges of the earth will take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed." Perhaps the first effect of the Gospel in some places may again be "not to send peace, but a sword;" and of this we are certain, that no power of earth or hell will be unemployed against its success. All these difficulties must be granted. They argue nothing against the power of God; but they truly prove that more than human power is requisite for the work; that all calculations founded on natural principles forbid our enterprise; and they support the representation of the prophet, "that the bones were very dry."

Such is the state of the heathen world; but the prophet's vision,

II. Points out the means by which its mystical resurrection is to be effected: "Prophesy upon these dry bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord."

Who can read this without immediately adverting to that similar command of the Saviour, when, after his resurrection, he looked with compassion upon a world "dead in trespasses and sins;" and said to the prophets of his own dispensation, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Go, traverse every part of the vale of death, and say, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord."

1. This direction intimates, that the ministry of the word is the grand means appointed by God for the salvation of the world.

This is a truth which cannot be impressed too deeply upon our minds. We live in an age of bold speculation; and the speculations of many on this subject have been conducted with too little regard for the authority of God. If, however, we have a plain and full direction from Him who is wisdom itself, what need we more? Why stop to question, when it is our duty to obey? But opinions have conflicted on a subject to which revelation has given certainty, and the recorded judgment of Heaven has been neglected in the passion for theory among men. Some have demurred to missionary efforts, because, in their opinion, heathen nations ought first to be civilized. But where are the apostles of civilization to be found? Who will cross seas, and traverse continents, to teach them arts, and laws, and science? Or are they to be left in their wretchedness till the boundaries of the civilized world, pushed out by the slow process of commerce or conquest, shall at length reach them? But the argument, if good for any thing, is only very partially applicable; for there are but few, very few, perhaps none, of the heathen so completely savage as not to be able to comprehend the main doctrines and duties of Christianity, when once their language is understood by their teachers. When Christianity is introduced, civilization

follows of course; and the desired end is reached by the direct instead of the circuitous road. Religion is the most efficient instrument of civilization. It is that which marks the distinctions between right and wrong with certainty, and therefore gives birth to good laws; it adds to human hopes and fears the solemn sanctions of eternity, and, by giving force to conscience, ensures their better observance; and it is the parent of morality, industry, and public spirit, the foundation and the top-stone, the strength and the sinews, of all well-ordered society.

Others have looked for the amelioration of the human race from the progress of science. But they forget that science affords no cure for moral evil; and that, when unallied with true religion, it must prove a curse, and not a blessing. Knowledge is power; and, like all other great powers, it is injurious and destructive when undirected. It is only by the influence of moral principles that it can receive its proper direction. Without this the enlarged capabilities of the mind become solely the instruments of ungoverned passions. This is not presumption; it is the dictate of experience. Greece and Rome give it their joint testimony. "The world by wisdom knew not God;" and in proportion to the advance of refinement, and the cultivation of science, both Greece and Rome sunk the deeper into the pollutions of superstition and vice.

Another class of speculatists would wait until wars and revolutions have broken up old systems of despotism, and introduced political liberty, before any means are taken to spread the Gospel. Here is another attempt to build the pyramid upon its point. In vain do men expect liberty without virtue; and where that exists, largely diffused through a people, oppression will be no more. It is in the religion of Christ, which ascertains all the relations of man, fixes the duties of all ranks, and enforces them by the highest motives, that we are to look for the principles of good government, as well as of civilization and science. It is "godliness which is profitable for all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

There are still persons of a different character from those just mentioned, whose principles, though not directly opposed to missionary efforts, are, in their practical consequences, somewhat unfavourable to them. Intent upon the study of prophetic times and seasons, they have too much love for the world, not to wish its conversion; but they have little hope of great success in the attempt, until their interpretations of certain prophecies are accomplished, and this or that antichrist shall have been destroyed. To such persons the words of Christ are full of instruction: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." He adds, however, a plain and obvious injunction, which cannot be mistaken: "But ye shall be witnesses unto me to the uttermost part of the earth." The only note of time which the obedient Christian will mark with a distinguishing character in his calendar, the only one he will intensely study, is opportunity: "As ye have opportunity do good unto all men." That opportunity is now before you; many "great and effectual doors are open;" and the command is, "Prophesy," "Preach my Gospel."

2. The words may be considered as an injunction on the ministers of the Gospel: "Prophesy unto these dry bones." But to whom is the message directed? To missionaries only? Nay: but to all who

are called "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." We are not sent only to this place, or to that congregation. Our commission is expressed in larger terms: "Go into all the world." Every minister is by virtue of this commission to him, this charter to the human race, made a minister of man,—a minister of the whole world. Providence may mark out for us a particular sphere of labour, but our general obligation to the world continues; and were we called by certain indications of duty to the "farthest verge of the green earth," our obligation to go is irreversible. This was the view which the great apostle took of the obligations of his ministry. "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise."—It was thus that our venerable founder conceived of the intent of the Christian ministry, when, in answer to a complaint of the irregularity of his preaching, he replied, "I look upon the whole world as my parish;" and it is thus I am persuaded that my brethren present on this occasion conceive of it. We may not, however, be called directly to the work of evangelizing the heathen; but by virtue of our mission to all the world we are called to further it; and this would be our apology, did we need one, for calling this assembly together this day to co-operate with us. It is in discharge of a solemn duty, and in obedience to our Master's command to diffuse the knowledge of his truth to the "ends of the earth." But,

3. The injunction, "Prophesy," respects not only ministers, but you also who have a private station in the Church.

Ministers and people cannot be separated in that which was ever intended to be the result of a common effort. Even the Apostle Paul, though under a more than ordinary direction, led from place to place by the immediate conduct of the Divine hand, working miracles himself, and the subject of frequent miraculous interpositions, never thought himself independent of the aids of the great body of Christians. He connected himself with their prayers: "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." "Pray for me, that utterance may be given me, to make known the mystery of the Gospel." He not only solicited their prayers, but received their gifts. They "ministered to his necessities" when employed in his work, "prophesying to the dry bones," and calling the dead to life.

This union between ministers and people in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ arises out of the very constitution of the Church. In that, as in every other association, there is a common as well as a special object. In the society of Christians the particular work of every member is his own salvation; but he owes a duty to the whole body, which is to promote, by all the means in his power, the common end of the association. That common object is to bring "the wickedness of the wicked to an end, and to establish the just." The Church is an association against error, against sin, against the powers of darkness throughout the whole earth. The duty of contributing to these ends devolves, therefore, upon all. It is not the business of ministers, of missionaries only; it is the work of the whole community. This public spirit, this expansion of influence and action, St. Paul endeavoured to excite among the Christians in his day. "No man," he observes, no Christian man, "liveth to himself." In this he only echoed the sentiment of his Divine Master: "Ye are the light of the world:"

not a candle under a bushel, to scatter a feeble light through the contracted space of a family or a neighbourhood, but a sun, to give light to the world. In perfect accordance with these views, not only apostles and teachers, but the whole body of disciples are called to be "perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect;" "for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and unjust." Delightful picture of the benevolent character intended to distinguish a Christian! He cannot be a selfish man; he cannot say, "My sphere of usefulness is at home only; the heathen have no claims upon me." His sun shines not upon his own habitation only; "its circuit is to the ends of heaven, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." His rain falls not exclusively upon his own fields; but, like the rich clouds of heaven wafted by the wind, he scatters the heavenly fulness with which he is replenished over every land to which Providence directs him.

Into this true spirit of your calling, you, my hearers, are invited to enter this day. "Prophesy to the dry bones;" not personally, but by sending forth men of God, with your blessing, your prayers, your liberalities. Behold, they are ready to leave their "country and their father's house;" to rend the ties of kindred and of friendship; to endure "weariness, and painfulness, and watchings, and hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness," "not counting their lives dear to them," for the love of souls. Hasten them away, that they may go to the most distant valleys of the dead, and cry, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord."

III. The prophecy also expresses the certain success which should follow the application of the appointed means.

The prophet prophesied; he called for the vital breath of heaven; the same which at the creation of man was "breathed into his nostrils;" and the result was, "the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Not less certain shall be the success of the Gospel among the heathen; and from this confidence we derive the life and spirit of our exertions. Despair destroys action; doubt chills it; but certainty carries it forth to the loftiest enterprises. This certainty is ours. We are engaged in no doubtful cause: the kingdom of Christ must prevail; and the word which has given him the heathen for his inheritance is "for ever settled in heaven." Our confidence rests,

1. On the power of the Gospel. Wherever the Gospel is preached, it is accompanied by a dispensation of the Spirit. "A day of visitation" is vouchsafed, and all to whom it is sent are put into a capacity to understand and obey it. We are not to consider the Gospel as a mere system of doctrines, and duties, and hopes, offered coldly to the reason of mankind. It is this system, but it is more; it is the source of a Divine influence which exerts itself upon the faculties of those who hear it. Its authorized emblem is fire; and, like that, it has its active energy as well as its light and splendour. The word is never sent without its Author. "Go, and preach my Gospel, and lo, I am with you;" not only for personal support, but, as the connection clearly indicates, to give success to your labours. The same union subsists between the Spirit and the word. He is sent "to convince the world of sin." "The words which I speak unto you they are spirit and they

are life." Here is our hope of success. The prophet's words were attended with the vital breathings of heaven. "God hath made us ministers of the Spirit." He goes forth with his servants as the cloud of glory before the Israelites, every where preparing their way, and shedding a secret but active energy upon the world; putting all men into a state of incipient salvation, assisting their minds to know and their wills to choose. If this power be used, they will be saved; if resisted, their condemnation is just. But the employment of means so adequate affords a moral certainty of great success. Merely to send the Gospel by faithful men to the heathen, is in one sense, to give life to the dead.

To this, which may be called the ordinary power of the Gospel, are to be added those extraordinary effusions of the Spirit upon certain places and people, at different times, which are usually granted in answer to earnest prayer. Thus the prophet is represented as calling for the breath of heaven: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." And let ministers go forth, either at home or among the heathens, in the strong spirit of prayer; let the people of God every where join them in supplicating those displays of "power and glory" which have been so often "seen in the sanctuary;" and it will be again proved whether He who holds the gales of heavenly life, as well as the natural "winds, in his fists," will not answer to the call of his "elect who cry day and night unto him," and make his word

"Like mighty winds and torrents fierce;"

subduing all opposition, and bearing down the strongest barriers of the empire of sin. Thus the Christian dispensation was introduced; thus every great revival of religion has been distinguished; and thus may we expect that God will frequently signalize his own future work in the conversion of heathen nations.

2. Our confidence in the certain success of the Gospel rests also upon experience.

Christianity is not a novelty; and its efficacy is not now to be put, for the first time, to the test of experiment. It is that powerful and Divine instrument which has for ages been wielded with glorious success in the cause of God and truth. Every part of the civilized world, has, at different times, felt its energy, and in every nation it has erected trophies of honour and victory. It is worthy of remark with what confidence in the efficiency of the Gospel, even in a very early period of Christianity, the apostle of the Gentiles prosecuted his mission. No expressions of doubt as to the success of his labours ever escaped his lips; his hand never hesitated in directing the blow, through fear that it might be struck in vain against the enemies of the cross. "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air." "Now thanks be to God which causeth us always to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." "I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also: for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Emboldened by the experience of its power, all the principal agents in those revivals of religion which have distinguished different ages of the Church have imbibed

the same spirit, and entered upon their mission with a courage which nothing but a firm confidence in its final triumphs could inspire. Perhaps our success, as ministers, depends greatly upon this confidence in the efficacy of the Gospel, which is, in truth, confidence in the promised co-operation of God. With the evidence of the experience of ages, descending in an accumulating stream down to the present moment, it would be most perverse to despair. Primitive Christianity gives us its evidence on this subject. Ancient false opinions dissipated; inveterate habits of vice broken; the vast empire of idolatrous Rome Christianized;—all attest the "weapons of our warfare" to be mighty in the hands of God. The reformation yields its testimony. Then Christianity, throwing off in her rising might that superincumbent load of superstition and error which more than a thousand years had heaped upon her, appeared again before the world with simple and commanding majesty, and proclaimed her energies to be unbroken and unimpaired. The present day gives its evidence to the efficacy of the Gospel, nor need we travel beyond the walls of this structure to collect it. You, my hearers, are witnesses of its power. Were we to speak of souls dead to God, defiled with sin, "without God and without hope," we might add also, "And such once were some of you; but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." To you, therefore, has the preaching of the Gospel proved "the power of God." And will it ever lose its power? Never, if the promise of God "standeth for evermore." If the dagons of Greece and Rome could not stand before the ark, but "fell and were broken," neither shall the gods of China and Hindostan. If we worship Thor and Woden no longer; if, in these islands, the light has penetrated the gloom of druidical forests, and put to shame the abominations of our forefathers, the crude mythology of Africa and the Southern Isles shall not resist its penetrating beams and consuming energy.

"The world cannot withstand
Its ancient Conqueror."

Once conquered, it already trembles before the second attack. "The arm of God is awake;" that arm which of old shook the gates of hell, and bowed down the pillars of the throne of Satan.

3. Prophecy confirms the certainty of success.

Take, my brethren, this glass, and look into the profound of the future. Is the prospect encouraging? Of old an interesting question was put to one of the watchmen of Israel: "Watchman! what of the night?" and the reply was, "The morning cometh, and also the night." Thus the day of primitive Christianity was succeeded by a night of error. But if we now "come again and inquire," we shall receive a more cheering answer. The watchman of Christianity cries, "The shadows flee away;" an everlasting day dawns upon the world, which, though it may be sometimes overcast, shall never be succeeded by a night. Let us, then, "turn aside and see this great sight." "The morning is spread on the mountains;" and "kings come to its light, and the Gentiles to the brightness of its rising." The gods of earth tremble and fly; for "in that day a man shall cast his idols to the moles and to the bats." The standard of Christ waves upon the hills, and "all nations flow

unto it," saying, "Our fathers inherited lies and vanity, and things wherein is no profit." Famines and pestilences desolate no more; wars "cease to the ends of the earth." The destroying angel passes over the habitations of men and finds no victim; for there is "light in all their dwellings," and every "door post is sprinkled with the blood." "The glory of the Lord is revealed, and all flesh behold it together." Then shall follow the great Sabbath of the world, in which heaven and earth, reconciled by Christ and inspired by grace and love, shall jointly offer the grateful sacrifice of adoring praise: "For every creature which is in heaven and earth heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

If, then, so glorious a certainty of present partial success, and of ultimate complete success, be established, what remains but that we apply to the great work of sending the blessed Gospel to the heathen with the utmost zeal? Duty demands it. We owe a debt of love to every man. God hath "blessed us that we may be a blessing." Sympathy demands it. "Now we are converted let us strengthen our brethren." Interest demands it. "He that watereth shall be watered himself." Our hatred of sin demands it. Let us haste to banish from the earth those abominations which offend the pure eyes of heaven. Pity to souls demands it. Shall myriads of immortal spirits sink into the gulf of perdition without an effort on our part to save them? Lastly; gratitude to God for past success demands it. The particular state of our missions will be explained to you at the public meeting in the afternoon of this day; and we shall therefore, only state generally, that God hath blessed us with great and distinguished success. The prophets have prophesied, and the bones have been shaken; the breath of God has entered them, and already they stand up by their thousands. God be praised! If you faint not, if, in common with your brethren throughout the Christian world, you still prosecute the good work, they shall be increased to "an exceeding great army." If, in the earnest fervour of your spirits, you pray, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," the whole valley shall soon heave with returning life. The holy influence shall sweep the desolate earth, and in every land the "dry bones" shall stand up, "the living, the living to praise God, as we do this day." Amen

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SERMON II.—*National Peace the Gift of God.*

Preached at the Methodist Chapel, Wakefield, on Thursday, July 7, 1814, being the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the Restoration of Peace.

"Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us," Isaiah xxvi, 12.

WE are assembled on an occasion more joyful than our most sanguine wishes, but a little time ago, could anticipate; and the object of our meeting is to perform a duty not more obligatory than delightful

The occasion is, the restoration of peace to Europe; and the duty, a devout and thankful acknowledgment of God, as the author of the blessing.

Happily, so much respect is paid in this country to the forms of religion, that to approach God in an act of national devotion is not a novelty. The circumstances of our approach to him this day are, however, new to our experience, and powerfully inciting to our gratitude. We have been accustomed to invoke him as the God of armies, "strong and mighty in battle;" but we now offer him our oblations as the "author of peace and the lover of concord." We have often been driven before him, by the scourge of his judgments, to confess our sins, and to deprecate his impending vengeance; but, though we do not now proclaim our righteousness; (that be far from us;) though we, on this day of holy joy, deeply deplore our offences; we yet acknowledge, that "he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities." His anger is turned away, and his hand of judgment is stretched out no longer.

If the present day forms a happy contrast to our days of national humiliation under public disappointments and disasters, it also stands in several interesting points of opposition and difference to the days of national thanksgiving which we have occasionally observed. On such occasions we rejoice in our military and naval successes, and ascribe, as was due, the victory to the Lord; we felt, too, a pride, not wholly to be condemned, in the valour of our troops, and the skill of their leaders; and we experienced no ordinary elevation of mind from the thought, that the British sword had seldom, during the contest, been drawn but in a cause manifestly just. Above all, we rejoiced in victory, as leading to peace. But, joyful as many of those occasions were, our thanksgivings could not be presented to Heaven unstained with sorrow: they were accompanied by painful recollections, which even the joy and triumph of victory could not suppress; for he that celebrates victory, celebrates an event which has been produced by an incalculable measure of human suffering. Thank God, we can now appear before him with almost unmingled feelings of gratitude and joy! The cries of anguish recently inflicted, the complaints of sorrow unassuaged by time, the harsh note of preparation for future combats, do not now mingle with our songs. A calm, a holy calm, is breathed over Europe, while the nations, so lately hostile, "lift up their hands" in the temple "without wrath," and "bless the Lord."

In attempting to improve the solemnity of this day we shall consider

I. What there is in the restoration of peace, generally considered, to excite our gratitude.

II. What there is in the particular circumstances of our country to warrant us in considering the blessing as of special value and importance.

III. The ground of our acknowledgment of God on this occasion: it is his work; he has "ordained peace for us;" he has "wrought all our works for us."

I. We are to examine what there is in the restoration of peace, generally considered, to excite our gratitude.

1. The first consequence of peace which naturally presents itself to our attention is, that the effusion of human blood is stayed. Man no

longer falls by man, and the earth is no more drenched with the blood of them who were designed to till and to enjoy it.

To the feelings of mere humanity, the destruction of human life by war is a deeply afflicting subject. Did the evil fall upon the decrepid and aged only, were its wastes directed against those only to whom hopeless sickness or sorrow had made life a burden, war would lose much of its horror; but its victims are men in the glow of youth and the vigour of maturity, when both their physical and intellectual strength qualify them to be most useful to their immediate connections and to society, when life is most ardently enjoyed, and may be best improved. But though these are the immediate victims of the direct stroke of war, how much misery is produced by its rebound! One person may fall in the field; but he falls not alone. His death makes his infants orphans, his mother sonless, and his wife a widow. To these accumulating miseries are to be added those which are produced by what may be called the secondary effects of war. The desolating extent of those effects has seldom been more deeply and darkly depicted than in that page of modern history which the peace we celebrate has closed. How many have died by rapine and cold blooded massacre! of hunger, and cold, and nakedness! How many, by sorrows too great for the spirit to sustain, have sunk into the grave! Let the mourning Moscow be permitted to give her witness, let the sufferings of Leipsic and other cities of Germany, let the more than fiend-like cruelties exercised upon Hamburgh, be recollected; and what heart, if it be the heart of a man, does not bound at the very sound of peace!

But the Christian will hail the cessation of slaughter with feelings of still higher joy than can be excited by a mere principle of humanity. If we think as we ought to think, we shall see in the waste of war not only the destruction of valuable human lives, but an awful destruction of souls! It is not indeed probable, considering the present state of society, that all those who fall on the field of battle would be saved, were they suffered to live the natural date of life. In all situations we have sufficient reason to mourn the fatal folly of our kind. Yet, when sickness or age is permitted to wear down life gradually, and under circumstances which may afford both opportunity and motives for reflection, there is at least hope. "When his soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers, there may be a messenger with him, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness." God may also be "gracious to him, and say, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." But of the majority of those who die by the sudden stroke of war, the truth is, however painful, that on the principles of the Bible no such hope can be entertained. They "are cut off in the very blossom of their sin, and sent to their account." Let us, then, thank God that the plague is stayed. The human frame is no longer torn and maimed by the instruments of merciless warfare; and human souls are no more abruptly driven by the rush of battle unprepared into the presence of a holy God.

2. The injurious effects produced by war upon the human character afford another reason for thanksgiving on the return of peace. It is impossible that a state of warfare should be long continued without greatly deteriorating, in some important respects, both individual and national character.

War is unfriendly to humanity. Tender as the heart may naturally be, the frequent recurrence of scenes of suffering tends to harden it. A few minds of a superior order may exist, who preserve, even under such circumstances, their natural sympathy and softness; but the general effects of a war are, to render the happiness of others less sacred, and to blunt that remorse which usually follows every aggression upon the comforts and lives of our fellow creatures. In barbarous states, where both domestic and foreign wars are frequent, and the state of society consequently greatly unsettled, these effects of war are made eminently conspicuous. The hallowed protection with which Christianity invests the person of man is broken through by brutal violence; and the life of a man and the life of a dog are held equally cheap. In better constituted states, where Christianity and refinement have exerted their influence even upon war, and softened many of its most rugged features, its tendency to separate man from man, and to deprive one of his natural place in the kindness of another, is yet sufficiently obvious to cause us to rejoice that it exists no longer, at least in Europe. A course of hostilities insensibly barbarizes every people, and renders them callous to human misery. Did we always judge of things absolutely, this effect might not so frequently follow; but we regard them comparatively; and when we have been accustomed to hear of tens of thousands falling by the sword, we are gradually brought to treat with the utmost indifference the loss of thousands or of hundreds. Thus the misery, which at another time would wring our hearts, after a war has been for a little time continued, scarcely excites a sigh. We cease to feel as we ought for even the great sufferings of men, because we can compare them with greater!

During a state of warfare, too, communities are usually distracted by intestine dissensions; and political strife gives birth to no virtues. War is either the parent of parties, or the questions which rise out of it give them an offensive asperity. Opposition creates malevolence and rancour; and thus not only is a nation divided against itself, but frequently a neighbourhood and a family. Brother is opposed to brother, and friend to friend: good offices are interrupted, or performed with less frankness; and the smooth current of social feeling is roughened with factious contentions. We therefore welcome peace. It breathes a stillness upon the troubled waters; it binds up a nation's civil breaches; and makes men to be "of one mind in a house."

Another effect of war is, that, when long continued, it embitters the animosities of nations, and tends to confirm those national antipathies, which, if unchecked by peace, would settle into a confirmed and malignant hatred.

I am, I confess, no admirer of that universal civism, that citizenship of the world, which, under the pretence of extending kind feelings to all men, would extinguish our partialities for our own country. This kind of philosophy may sneeringly ask, "Why should I love the people on the other side of a river or a chain of mountains more than those on this side,—my own countrymen more than others?" The question may be answered by another: "Why should I love my own family and friends more than others?" Heaven designed it, and formed our natures for the reception of such particular affections. They arise from associations of ideas which cannot be controlled without the most un-

natural violence. But as my particular affection for my own friends is no reason why I should hate others, the warmest patriotism is not at all irreconcilable with universal charity. This charity is impaired by war. A truly Christian man will preserve it in full activity even in a state of hostility; but Christianity, though so general in name, has but a partial influence. Conquest produces insolence; defeat, hatred and desire of revenge. All the bad passions are called into exercise by rivalry and emulation; and the individuals of the contending nations feel as though each had a personal quarrel to decide, and a personal injury to revenge. The worst feelings are excited in the highest degree, and exhibited on the largest scale. In this view the human character assumes the aspect of even diabolical malignity. But peace corrects this evil, and allays the hatred of nations. It establishes intercourse, and intercourse creates friendship; it winds the powerful ties of interest round the hostile parties, and thus strengthens their union. Those who met like demons in the field now associate like brothers in the walks of commerce; and national antipathies, though they may not give place to positive affection, (that can only be the result of the diffusion of true Christianity,) are at least neutralized, and lose their mischievous activity.

3. A third reason for gratitude with reference to the peace is, that it has been produced by the signal triumph of a righteous cause. This renders the present a peace emphatically. It brings both a cessation from arms, and relief from oppression. These are not always the joint effects of what is denominated peace. Peace is not always a blessing. In some cases it is only a term for the stillness, the quiet of desolation and death. Such was the peace which succeeded the invasion and conquest of Judea by the king of Babylon. Those who fell not by the sword were carried into captivity. The peace of Judea was, in this case, a dreary solitude. Thank God, this is not the kind of peace we celebrate this day. Our cities are not "desolate without inhabitant;" our fields do not lie untilled; we do not sit down by the rivers of some foreign Babylon, and weep while we remember England.

Peace is often the result of the superiority acquired by the aggressor. The cause of right does not always at once prevail. Unoffending nations are conquered, or obliged to submissions contrary to their rights and interests, and then peace follows; peace dictated, not argued. In this case it is at best but a very partial and comparative blessing.—There is peace, but not the spirit of peace. Secret heart burnings remain; and a determination, a just determination on the part of the oppressed, to seize the first opportunity to redeem their cause. But this is not the character of the present peace. It is not such as the humbled tyrant would have imposed upon Europe,—peace accompanied by submission. No; the "rod of the oppressor" is broken, the forged fetter is eluded, justice has triumphed, ambition has been punished, and a bond of union knit round the powers menaced with subjection which we hope will secure them against future similar attempts. Yes; the right has prevailed! And because every great object of the contest is accomplished, (and none certainly has been aimed at above the lowest point of moderation,) in a more than ordinary sense we may conclude peace to be restored to earth, because much good will has been established among men.

4. We rejoice in peace as the completion of a course of providential dispensations highly conducive to the instruction of the world.

It would indeed be strange, if that awful and eventful drama which has extended its acts through twenty years, exhibited the greatest states of Europe as its actors, held the attention of the world in breathless suspense as to the event, and given the strongest excitation to the hopes and fears of men,—it would, we repeat, be a deep enigma in Providence, and contrary to all that has hitherto been known among men, if this drama should be without its grand moral; if its scenes should pass away like the shapes impressed upon the clouds tossed by a storm, and leave no trace of instruction; if no truths have been established, no principles supported. Both the final cause and the usual effect of God's judgments are to teach men righteousness. Judgment, without instruction and correction as the ends of its infliction, is the lot of the damned, but not of man in a state of probation. While trial lasts, whether nations or individuals be the subjects of it, all the events of joy or wo which befall them speak instruction, and teach wisdom.—Even in the natural world, the storm which bears down in its violence the tree of the forest, and the proud edifices of the city, neither rages without direction, nor passes away without a blessing: it ventilates the atmosphere, and scatters its noxious vapours. The flood which swells above its banks, and carries for a time desolation over the fields, deposits the seeds of useful plants, and gives fertility to the soil over which it rages. It were therefore impious to suppose the moral world to be less wisely and graciously governed. Seeds of important truth have as certainly been scattered over Europe during her years of desolation, which, now the proud billows have subsided, the genial state of peace will foster into growth. The principles which have been supported, the lessons which have been taught, during the late contest, we shall not attempt distinctly to enumerate; but he is very unobservant who does not see that it has not been terminated so as to sanction, in the least degree, any of those false and destructive principles in policy, religion, and morals, which, at different periods of the struggle, have had their numerous advocates. What man of thinking now fixes himself on either extreme of political opinion, and advocates either the *jus divinum* of kings, or the sovereignty of mobs? Who now looks to a vain philosophy to accomplish that which nothing but true religion can perform,—to perfect the human character, and banish misery from the world? Who will now attempt, after the fatal example exhibited by France, to support power by terror, or to realize the chimera of universal empire? If, then, sober principles have received, on the largest scale and the fairest trial, the sanction of experience; and if injurious notions, though decked with the most attractive colours of the imagination, and supported by no mean names, have been frowned down by the aspect of the events we have witnessed; if the ambitious have been taught moderation, sovereigns to cultivate the love of their people, and people to uphold the legal authority of their governors; and especially if religion has achieved new triumphs, and received new homage; then the storm has not raged in vain, the contest has not terminated without instruction. Important lessons have been taught, and the future happiness of the world is more firmly laid in increasing regards to political justice and to true religion.

For these reasons we this day present our grateful thanks to Almighty God for the conclusion of peace, considered generally; but,

II. We consider what there is in the particular circumstances of this country to warrant us in considering the blessing as of special and particular value.

1. We have preserved our national honour.

Peace is a blessing which we have in common with other nations our allies; but this we have peculiar to ourselves, that we never, like them, co-operated with the enemy of the repose of the world in his aggressions upon the rights and peace of mankind. Either from force or choice, there is not a state, freed in the last struggle from the grasp of France, which has not stained its character by joining, at some period of the contest, with that ambitious power to bind the yoke upon the neck of its neighbour. All have in turn marched in the track of the tyrant, and in different degrees shared his guilt. But as to ourselves, it is an inspiring thought, and one that calls for our gratitude, that we have been preserved from this infamy. Our strength and wealth have been employed to rescue nations, not to oppress them; we have been their refuge, not their rod. By the blessing of God, and the prayers of the faithful, we have gone through the contest, and are come out of it with a high and unstained character; and, if character be strength, the peace is doubly endeared to us by the consideration, that it presents this to us, among its other exhibited blessings. This is the valuable legacy we shall leave to the next age; and we trust even in this to derive the most important advantages from it. We hope that the influence created by the character and conduct of this country will be employed to control animosities, and to make the peace permanent; that it will be incessantly exerted in favour of the enslaved African, till a system of robbery and murder, so long the reproach of Christendom, shall be eternally and universally abolished; and that it will, in no ordinary degree, aid the attempts which are so generally making by the Christians of Great Britain to evangelize the world.

2. Another circumstance which gives a peculiar value to the peace, as it respects ourselves, is, that it was seasonable.

After a long and doubtful contest in which we had been often baffled, we had put forth our utmost strength. All the energies of the country, military and financial, were summoned for the struggle of that eventful hour which was to determine our future lot. I think I am warranted in saying that we had buckled on the harness for the last time, that we were making our last effort; and this I know, from good authority, that, in the event of the contest being prolonged a few months longer, the difficulties foreseen in our financial arrangements were such as to appal the ablest of our statesmen. Had we not succeeded at the moment, the strong probability is, that we should have fallen under the giant arm of our enemy; and in that case we should have fallen to rise no more as a nation of the first order. Defeat, disgrace, subjection, and ruin would then have been the only inheritance left for ourselves, and our children. The heart even now chills to reflect upon the vast interests which have been poised in a balance trembling with so much uncertainty. What, then, ought to be our gratitude, when we reflect, that, in this critical moment, this crisis, this vacillating libration of our future fate, God interposed. "The lot was cast into the lap, the dis-

posal was of the Lord;" and while we watched the event with heart-rending anxiety, it turned up—victory and peace.

3. The peace has a peculiar interest to us, as it may be considered indicative of the Divine favour and approbation.

On this subject we would not be presumptuous, and yet it is of great importance to know whether those things we esteem blessings are given in mercy, or allowed in anger. If God has in mercy given us peace, then in its results it will prove a real good; if not, it will be so only in name. If it be a witness of national forgiveness; (and there is national as well as individual forgiveness;) if we are authorized to use the language of a pious Jew, and say, "Lord, thou hast been favourable to thy land, thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin;" we have then indeed special reasons for joy and gratitude; and though we would tread this ground cautiously, it may at least be affirmed that the happy change in our affairs, which has ultimately led to peace, followed, and, in some instances, immediately followed, certain acts of national reformation, and acknowledgment of God, which, from the condescending assurances of his word, we know must have been acceptable to him.

The interest we are now taking in the universal abolition of the slave trade cannot fail to remind us, that, during the conflict, and while we were under the rod of God, we renounced, as a nation, all participation in that detestable traffic. That it was ever sanctioned by our legislature, constituted a great national offence; a blot, broad and black, upon our statutes and our character. This only can be said in pallia tion, that the atrocities of that system of outrage were for a long time unknown to the body of the people. The scenes of its barbarities were laid in distant lands, or on the lonely ocean. The shriek of terror extorted by the appearance of the man hunter was given to the mountain winds; and the murmurs of the sufferer, as he was dragged across the waters, were uttered only to the waves. The islands, whose ancient solitudes were disturbed by the sounds of the manacle and the lash, were visited by few but the interested; and the miseries of an injured portion of our race were thus kept from the public view. When, however, by the activity of men whose names are ever to be honoured, the wrongs of Africa reached our ears, and were spread before our sight, they successfully appealed to those principles which Christianity had implanted in the country; and after a struggle, not long but sharp, with wicked selfishness, and stupid ignorance, the cause of humanity triumphed. Now, no inhabitant of Africa lifts up enchained hands to us, to say in the meek but piercing language of reproach, "Am I not a man and a brother?" Certainly our joy at this reflection is damped by an unhappy article in the treaty; yet the public and the legislature have both freed themselves from all participation in the act. The friends of humanity have acquired, even from this, additional energy to press forward to the completion of all their hopes; and we doubt not but the spirit manifested and sustained in great Britain on this subject will eventually remove this reproach from Christendom, and proclaim an eternal jubilee to the continent of Africa.

To this great instance of national reformation we have to add certain acts in which we have very generally acknowledged God, and discovered a just concern for his glory. The distribution of the word

of God, and the support of missions to the heathen, may almost be denominated national acts, because the institutions which have been formed for these great objects number a large part of the nation among their active supporters; while the abolition of all persecuting statutes in matters of religion, and the opening of British India to the labours of missionaries, as they were acts of the legislature, were, in the fullest sense, acts of the nation. We do not affirm that we have merited any thing by these acts. We have done no more than our duty; we have not done so much as duty requires; our works are defective, and our sins numerous: nevertheless, we are not without warrant in considering our national blessings as the result of God's kind consideration of those acts which have been done for the glory of his name. He who will not fail to notice the gift of "a cup of cold water" to a disciple when given for his name's sake; he who exempted the Hebrew prince from the common doom of his family, because some good thing was found in him toward his God; has not, we are persuaded, forgotten the "works of faith and labours of love," performed eminently for his name's sake by thousands of British Christians. In philosophy we connect effects with their causes. Why not then in religion? And if we can consider the blessing of peace as the consequence of our acknowledging God as a people, it comes to us stamped with more than ordinary value. We see in peace the pledge of the Divine approbation, perhaps the seal of national forgiveness, and certainly so much of favour immediately following our efforts in the cause of religion as to afford us the highest encouragement to persevere in them. And therefore,

4. We see a particular reason to be thankful for peace, as it will increase our means of promoting the kingdom of Christ in the world, and thus establish our national prosperity by continuing to us the blessing of God.

If we have loved nations when enemies and sought their salvation, we shall not love them less as friends. If we have ministered to their prisoners in jails and prison ships, we shall not relax now we have access to their thousands at home. The communication with many distant lands will now be more safe and more frequent. The enterprize of the merchant will open the way for the enterprize of the missionary. Our bales and our Bibles will be conveyed across the ocean at an easier freight; and the diminished burdens and increased opulence of the country will enable the lovers of Christ, and of the souls of men, to make more liberal sacrifices for the promotion of the truth.

But it may be asked, Will the peace, as we expected, quicken our commerce and increase our wealth? Are there not both fears and indications to the contrary? There may; but they are founded on partial facts and narrow views. The affairs of the world, for so long a time diverted from their proper channel, will not at once revert to it. In the mean time, temporary and partial inconveniences are to be expected. But, if no moral causes prevent it, peace must be favourable, not only to our commerce, but to that of the world. It evidently enters into the plans of Providence to foster commerce in all nations. By this the Almighty brings them together to improve and moralize them. It is an important instrument in his hands of civil and religious improvement.

As long as the sun shines obliquely upon the poles, and directly on the tropics; as long as his unequal effusions of light and heat shall create a variety of climate and productions; so long will one country remain dependent upon another, either for its necessaries or its comforts. This mutual dependence is the basis of commerce; and as long as the earth can be rendered more productive, and human ingenuity still find room for its exhibition in impressing upon its productions new and improved forms, (and no limit has hitherto been assigned to either,) so long, if peace be used to promote Christianity among mankind, the wealth and refinement of every nation under heaven may be indefinitely increased, till civil refinement and happiness, and religious light and influence, shall become the equal portion of all the inhabitants of the globe. We trust in God to continue prosperity to this land; and that portion of our wealth which is offered in acts of benevolence will consecrate the rest. We rejoice in peace, as it will give us better opportunities to prosecute the glorious idea of Christianizing the world.

But we consider,

III. The reason of our thankful acknowledgment of God on this occasion. He is the giver of the blessing of peace. It is his work: "Thou hast ordained peace for us; thou hast wrought all our works for us."

This is a most important principle; and if our hearts be not firmly grounded in it, our thanksgivings are mockery; for why do we thank him, if we ascribe the work to second causes? Our bereavements and our blessings are equally from God: "I make the light, and form the darkness; I make peace; and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." He that excludes God from the world of providence might as well exclude him from the world of nature. He who can attribute the events which are daily taking place in society, and especially such events as are connected with the celebration of this day, to mere human agency, is not less an atheist than the man who ascribes the birth and being of the fair system of the universe to chance or to the dance of atoms. The divine moral attributes of truth, righteousness, and holiness, are as conspicuous in the arrangements of the moral world, as the strong lines and striking characters of eternal power and Godhead are in the natural; and the history of the world is nothing less than the history,—I speak with reverence,—the history of God himself; the history of his attributes, displayed in the government of his creatures. We need, indeed, no other argument to prove this, than the constant connection which every age has witnessed between vice and misery, rebellion and punishment. All history attests the fact of such a connection; for though history has not often been written expressly with a view to such inquiries, though myriads of events are unknown to us, and though "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet enough is recorded to put the subject beyond all doubt. Though the path of Divine Providence be generally trackless, yet here and there justice or mercy has erected a monument to indicate its course and direction. These monuments history has preserved; and where that is silent, and furnishes no information as to certain remote periods of time, and states whose very name has almost perished, God has not left himself without witness. Distant and now uninhabited deserts disclose to the traveller remains of magnificent cities, still braving the

wastes of time, to say, "Here once was grandeur, and luxury, and pride." No inscription, perchance, is left to indicate who were their inhabitants, or by what agents they were destroyed. This silence is, however, trumpet tongued in the ear of reflection. To every succeeding generation their nodding columns proclaim, that God's dealings with men have been alike from the earliest ages of human existence; that when pride and fulness of bread had produced vice and rebellion, an offended God made of the "defenced city a heap," and left no stone upon another, except as a monument of their dissolute wickedness, and of his righteous displeasure.

Hence it is, that because the world is thus constantly governed by a merciful, yet holy, and righteous, and unchangeable Being, nothing substantially new takes place in it. We have lived in an extraordinary age of revolutions; yet nothing new has occurred, except in mode and circumstance. Old things only have been re-acted. In every age, when God's blessings have been abused to luxury and excess, they have been withheld; and plague or famine has testified that God is no inobservant spectator of human actions. When, in time of peace, men, being in no danger from abroad, have grown fearlessly licentious at home, the sword has received its commission to awake against such as, sitting at ease, forget God. When war has corrected the vices of a land, the sword of the Lord has returned to its scabbard, and has rested till the daring crimes of men have again provoked the keenness of its edge. When the tyrants of the earth, elated with pride, have trampled upon those, whom, by their office, they were bound to protect, a spirit of resistance has been raised up against them in their own kingdom, or a hardy invader has been permitted to strike down thrones, unsupported by the love of the people. And when, on the other hand, a people mistake licentiousness for liberty, and rend the state by faction and rebellion, Heaven in its anger raises up some despotic ruler to chastise with scorpions those who will not be governed by equity and moderation. He in his turn is laid aside, or is pushed on to his ruin by his blinded ambition. These are events which not only we, but the people of every age, have witnessed; and the whole proves that "the Lord reigneth, let the world be never so unquiet."

Of so much importance is it to acknowledge the interposition of God in the changes which take place in the world, that the Scripture pronounces that man brutish who does not observe it; and when he is not acknowledged spontaneously, when men wilfully close their eyes upon his righteous acts, he will even force himself upon their notice by the severity of his judgments. "Lord," cries the prophet in this chapter, "when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and the fire of their enemies shall devour them." On the contrary, he "who is wise and understands these things shall know the loving kindness of the Lord." Let us then acknowledge God: but not coldly, not in a heartless form. His "hand has been lifted up" too high, it has been too active in our favour, it has done too many "wonderful things" in judgment and mercy, not to be specially remembered with mingled feelings of wonder and gratitude.

When I addressed you on the late day of general thanksgiving for the victories obtained by the allies, I endeavoured to lead your contemplations to those obvious instances of Divine interposition which

had then occurred, and which then brightened our prospects into that state of peace into which we have now entered. We need not now repeat them. We then marked the hand of God in permitting those nations which had opposed his truth, and which had been distinguished by religious bigotry and hostility to the rights of conscience, to fall into such a state of political weakness, as made them an easy conquest to the invader. We endeavoured, too, to point out those lessons which had been taught the world by that permissive Providence which suffered the horrid system of infidelity to display its true character in the destruction of the peace of individuals and the peace of the world. We traced the march of proud ambition at the head of the most formidable armament of modern times; we saw the power and pride of man "broken without hand;" we "ceased from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," and owned God. "He blew with his wind, and they were scattered;" and they fell before "his cold." These scenes of horror and of retribution we then contemplated, as well as the failure of every attempt of the tyrant to retrieve his affairs down to the decisive battles of Leipsic. It remains for us still to acknowledge the operations of the Divine hand to the present moment. On the last thanksgiving day we departed from the house of God full of the hope of peace; and we indulged the rich anticipation of that state into which we are now entered. Our hopes were not, however, at once realized. Our fair prospects were more than once overcast; and the public mind was frequently agitated, and not without reason, by serious fears of disappointment. But these alternations of our feelings, and of the events which produced them, have only served the better to prepare our minds to mark a more than human agency in the glorious consummation. God was ripening the result his own way; and the last acts of the eventful series rendered his arm most conspicuous. After the falling tyrant had in his infatuation rejected terms of peace which would have established him in his dominion over France, his metropolis, the pivot and centre of his power, fell by a military error on his part which astonished the world, because it was an error which the commonest mind might have perceived and avoided. He withdrew his army from the only point which he was concerned to defend, and left that way open which ought to have been closed by the firmest fence of iron. But God had "turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness;" his accustomed sagacity forsook him; and his polluted throne, struck by an unseen hand, crumbled into dust. Our proper language on this survey is, "What hath God wrought!" For, as if he specially purposed to humble that vain but unhappily too prevalent philosophy, which would either entirely exclude God from the government of the world, or restrain him to the observance of certain general laws, by which, with the boldest effrontery, it would mark out the bounds of his operations, he has interposed in the affairs of Europe by more than usually striking displays of an immediate agency. He listened not to our prayers for the downfall of oppression; the glorious deliverence of nations which we celebrate this day, was not given to our most anxious wishes, till that he might lead us from our destructive dependance on second causes, he had cleared the scene of all those actors on whose wisdom and influence we had been accustomed to depend. Where, in the late wondrous whirl of events, were the old statesmen

of Europe, in whose experience and talents only the nations were accustomed to feel confidence? They were either turned into the walks of private life, or gathered to their fathers. Scarcely one of them was seen connected with counsels which have had so happy an issue. Men of only secondary name and influence have filled their places. Even the military leaders were new; not one of them had more than a recent fame. They were not the men to whom public opinion, at the onset of the last struggle, would have confided the destiny of nations. There were great captains, as well as great statesmen, in privacy, whom the public would have brought forth, and on whose tried ability it would have reposed its trust. One, indeed, was brought upon the stage; and of so great importance was his accession accounted, that it was not thought too much to bring him across the Atlantic to lead the troops which were to achieve the independence of the continent. This "arm of flesh" was, however, withered. He on whom so much trust rested fell in the first battle,—a battle evidently ill advised, though advised by him, and unsuccessful, though directed by him. In a very different sense from that given by the hypocrisy and egotism of the tyrant, we may see in this remarkable circumstance, the finger of God; and not only in this employment of secondary and unfamed agents, but in all the stages of approach to the grand result. Numerous circumstances, over which human power had no control, contributed to hasten it; and it is not less striking than any thing beside in the interesting story, that a coalition formed of nations naturally jealous of each other, who had been more than once betrayed by each other, who all had wrongs to remember and avenge, yet should, contrary to their former conduct, maintain the league in the spirit of unparalleled unanimity and pliancy of temper;—a circumstance which the most sanguine politician could not anticipate, but which was, under God, the means of ultimate triumph.

So eminent, indeed, is the hand of God in all this, that his interposition was never more generally acknowledged; and we feel a pleasure in the fact, that it has not only been owned in the pulpit and the temple, but in the senate; and that two of our most distinguished statesmen, neither of whom will be charged with enthusiasm, have publicly ascribed the late events, not to the wisdom of man, but to the agency of God. "Such," said one, "was his view of the most important change, that it would be presumptuous in him to attribute it to human policy or human exertions; for if ever there were times or events more than others which called for it, these must be ascribed to the behests of an over-ruling Providence." I am sure we shall re-echo these sentiments: "We lift up our hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. He hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Yea, let Israel now say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hands of all their enemies."

I conclude with observing, that, however suitable deep and lively sentiments of gratitude are to the occasion of the solemnities of this day, much more is required of us, both by our duty and our interest. Do we shudder at the idea of the rekindling of the torch of discord, and the renewal of the devastations of war? Is it the earnest wish of our souls, that the peace may be eternal; that the sword may gleam in the eyes of men no more; and that the earth may never more be moistened

except by the dews of heaven; that the final reign of the Prince of Peace may commence, and "quietness and assurance for ever" become the lot of man? We all can contribute something to these glorious results; and it is our duty to contribute all we can toward them. Let us first support the influence of religion in our own hearts, and light up a brighter lustre of truth and holiness in our example. Let us endeavour zealously, and in the spirit of meekness, to counteract all immorality in our respective neighbourhoods, and to promote the salvation of others by our advice, our influence, and our prayers. Let us become the fervent advocates and active supporters of all such institutions among us as are directed to the reformation and instruction of our country,—of schools, of Bible and tract societies, and of home missions. Let us go farther: let us be unwearied in carrying into effect the great plan of evangelizing the world, which the charity inspired by the Gospel has dictated to the minds of British Christians. By this means, we shall best promote universal peace, the peace of nations, the peace of families, the peace of individuals, peace with each other, peace with ourselves, peace with God. For purposes of this kind, we can depend but little upon political arrangements. The world can only be made happy by the diffusion of moral principles; and the Gospel only can effectually diffuse them. Go, then, system of mercy; take to thyself the wings of our beneficence, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth; go on thy errand of love, sped by our bounty and our prayers; confront the misleading errors of false religion, and banish them from human minds. Go, testify to every fallen child of Adam, that "God is love;" bear thy message of mercy every where, and say, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely." We have "peace on earth;" but go and breathe thy soft and peaceful spirit into men's hearts; teach kings moderation, and their subjects order; destroy the causes of war in their fountain, the human heart, and "bring the desolations of the world to a perpetual end." Go, from conquest to conquest; and may thy triumphs never end, while there is a nation on the globe to bless, or a soul among its countless myriads to save. To God, the author of peace, be ascribed glory and dominion for ever. Amen.

SERMON III.—*Religious Instruction an essential part of Education.*

Preached in Great Queen-street Chapel, before the Teachers of the Sunday School Union, October, 1818, *and Published at the request of the Committee of that Institution.*

"And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me," Mark ix, 36, 37.

THE prophets of the Old Testament not only expressed themselves in the elevated language of figure and poetry, but in many instances used a symbolic action to convey the messages they were commissioned to deliver to men. They conduct their readers to scenes, often of sublime and terrific import, and record the performance of numerous

figurative actions, which could not have been indications of the intention of the speaker, unless they had been very extraordinary. In their case the Holy Spirit made use of a strong oriental imagination to convey his revelations; and this faculty was not less active in their hearers than in themselves.

The teaching of Christ was of a calmer character. The symbolic scenes to which he points are usually of the soft, the pastoral, the domestic kind: he seldom teaches by prophetic action. Perhaps it was necessary to make this distinction between the Master and the servant; that he should show the superior dignity of his nature by an entire command of his imagination; that he should thus demonstrate that he was not so much the subject of inspiration, a mere human being, bending under its weight, or transported by its energies, as its original Fount and Source. While his form was that of a servant, his manner was that of a God.

In the text, however, he teaches by action; but it is action still strictly in character. His object was, as we learn from the parallel place in St. Matthew's Gospel, not only to recommend children to the care of his disciples, but to teach the disciples themselves an affectionate, an innocent, and a docile temper. But the action marks no turbulence of feeling, no high-wrought activity of the fancy. It was one which accorded with the kindliness of his nature, and affectingly characterized it. Never was dignity so sweetly attempered by benevolence; never did the condescending tenderness of an elevated nature issue in a current at once so gentle and so copious. "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me."

A similar action, with additional circumstances, is mentioned in the next chapter. Encouraged, perhaps, by the transaction recorded in the text, "they," the parents, "brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them;" &c.

The whole of this history is in proof of the interest which our Lord took in children: but it is more; it contains his sanction, given in the most impressive manner, to their moral nurture, and religious education. When, after he had blessed them, he returned them to their parents, what did that action import? Said it not, "Love your children because I love them; love them religiously; be it your care that they forfeit not my blessing; instruct their minds; correct the rising vices of their nature; give them at a proper age to my Church; offer them by your daily prayers to my continued favour; 'for of such is the kingdom of God?'"

Had the legislation of Christianity made no provision for the education of children, it would have been obviously defective. It would have been an anomaly in moral history; it would have been seen, if not in opposition to the views and exertions of the wise and good in every age, yet, at least, not in co-operation with them. So important did this subject appear to most of the legislators of antiquity, that they

incorporated their systems of education with the laws which they gave their countrymen; and scarcely has any subject received more attention from divines and philosophers of every age. No express precept for the education of children, it is true, appears in the discourses of Christ: it was not necessary. His mission was to the Jews. A precept was already inscribed in their law, enjoining them to communicate their religious knowledge to their children; and the rule was in practice. With whatever defects or errors their religious system might, in that day, be chargeable, they themselves were not guilty of withholding it from their children. It was not necessary to re-enact this precept, any more than that which prescribed the sanctification of a Sabbath. Both were moral duties, and parts of the law which he "came not to destroy." The observance of a Sabbath was in the common law of society before the statutes of Moses were recorded; and this was the case also with the duty of instructing children. It was the law of the patriarchal ages, when every father of a family was its priest and teacher, as well as sovereign; and it was only made the law of parents formally when the priestly office was confined to a particular tribe. The careful and especially the religious education of children was, therefore, among the Jews, an acknowledged obligation. But when Christianity was given to the Gentiles, a direct precept was necessary. It appears, therefore, in numerous passages, and in various forms of injunction, in the apostolical Epistles; and "to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," has descended, with other obligations of the Christian law, to us and to all who profess the Christian name.

Sanctioned then as is the principle of that work of charity in which you, my hearers, are so actively and so honourably engaged, by the authority of inspiration itself; denounced as ignorance is, in the sacred record, as the source of the greatest evils to the individual and to society; and intimately as every hope of civil improvement and personal salvation is bound up with kind, careful, and persevering instruction; the subject must be considered of great importance, and one to which our attention ought frequently to be directed. Suffer me, then, to occupy your attention with a few remarks on education considered generally; to connect the principles we may thus establish with the institutions in which you take so leading a part; and to adduce considerations from the text which may afford motives for perseverance in your important labours.

I. We consider the subject of education generally. Perhaps no word, so frequently heard, has in modern times been used with less perception of its import. In the sense in which it is usually taken, it signifies instruction in letters, human science, and in various accomplishments of the mind and body. So entirely distinct is it considered from moral, and especially from religious, instruction, that when the particular process is spoken of by which the truths of our Divine religion are communicated to the mind, and impressed upon the heart, we are obliged, in order to make ourselves understood, to prefix an epithet to the term, and call it a religious education. This exclusion of every thing religious from the notion of education is so complete, that to say of any one, "He is educated," conveys no idea of religious care having been exercised over him in his early years; no idea of religious principles having been at any time implanted or now actually

operating in his heart; and though no truth of the sacred Scriptures should be clearly apprehended by his understanding, he would nevertheless, pass, in the language of the world, for a person of education. This could not have happened, had not a very culpable alteration taken place in modern manners. There were times, and among ourselves, when every educated person was presumed to be acquainted with the faith of his ancestors and of his country; when the catechism and the Bible were among the first books put into his hand; when the elements of religious truth and of science were taught together; and when even the higher branches of learning, like his daily food, were "sanctified by the word of God and prayer." The practice is changed; and education, as a matter of course, no longer implies religious information.

But notwithstanding this alteration, never did we hear so much of the value and advantages of education, and of its connection with happiness and virtue. But of what is this affirmed? Of "a thing of shreds and patches:" Splendid and many coloured it may be, yet not worthy of a better appellation, because not connected with any principle, or directed to any end, worthy of our being. To open the mind to human science, to awaken the pleasures of taste, and to decorate the external man with the adornings of civil and refined life, might be sufficient to occupy the office of education, were there no God, no Saviour, and no future being. Were this life not a state of probation, had man no peace to make with his God, no law of his to obey, no pardon to solicit from his mercy, then this would be education; but most affectingly deficient will the knowledge of that youth be found, and negligent in the highest degree must they be considered who have the charge of his early years, if his mind be left unoccupied by other objects, and unfamiliarized to higher considerations. Thus we may rear "a whited wall," or build "a painted sepulchre;" but they enclose an uncorrected corruption within. Perhaps we do worse; we give play and activity to the powers, without directing their movements, and abandon instruments of an energy not to be calculated to the stimulus of principles and passions which employ them only for the purposes of destruction.

Many definitions of education have been attempted, but the one of which I shall avail myself, to assist me in conveying my views on this subject, is equally recommended by its own excellence, and by the character of its author. It is by the venerable Hooker, an authority to which, on general subjects at least, men of all parties have bowed with respect. "Education," according to this eminent man, "is the means by which our faculty of reason is made both the sooner and the better to judge rightly between truth and error, good and evil."

Let us take the first part of this excellent definition, and it will appear, that the education which enables us to judge rightly between truth and error must be substantially religious.

We are all interested in truth, but we are not interested in all truths equally; nor can an acquaintance with truths of inferior consequence compensate us for those of which we may be left ignorant. Truths are important to us, only as our circumstances render them so; and in education we naturally lead our youth principally to the knowledge of those which may most serve them in the stations of future life which they are designed to occupy. That youth would be preposterously educated whose attention should be principally engaged by the science

of music, when he is designed for the walks of commerce; or who should be confined to the study of physic, though he is intended for the profession of law. This would not be education; it would be trifling and mockery. But if it should appear, that there are truths in which man is interested, not as he is of this or that profession, but which are of the first importance to him as man, and equally so in every condition; which it is alike necessary for him to know, whether he be rich or poor, and whether circumstances conduct him through this life by its higher or its lower walks; then may we confidently decide, that that education is even cruelly defective which does not communicate them, from the earliest period, patiently and fully. Such are the truths of religion. What God is, and what are his rights and claims; what man is, and what his fears and his hopes; what is that redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and offered unto mankind; and by what means we may become personally interested in a covenant of peace and salvation, without which the conscience can know no peace in life, and the immortal spirit no rest after it; what is that futurity toward which we are all hasting from infancy itself, and where that unfrequented path lies which alone can conduct us to its felicities.

These surely are truths of awful and universal concern; truths which, when known, confer strength and impress a right direction on the mind; discipline it for the acquirement of lower and useful science; and shed a steady light on almost every other kind of knowledge, in which society can be interested; at once fixing in the mind the standard of right judgment on every moral subject, and the principles which impel man to active usefulness. To obtain the knowledge of these truths, and to be able to distinguish them from the insidious errors by which in all ages they have been simulated or substituted, must be the principal end of a true education: it cannot, at least without the utmost shamelessness, if it neglect them, pretend to be an education on the principles of Christianity. But to know these truths, it is necessary to know the Bible. From that source only can they be drawn; that is the only standard by which moral errors can be detected, the only shield by which their shafts can be turned aside; and he is neither inducted into truth, nor enabled to judge rightly between it and error, who has not "from a child known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation."

"But," says the author of the definition, "education is the means by which we are enabled to judge rightly between good and evil;" and if so, then is an education, much more comprehensive than instruction in literature and science, demanded by the best interests of our children.

As truth is of various kinds, so is evil. There is the evil of affliction; but of that, experience, not education, is the preceptor. There are civil crimes, of which human laws take cognizance; and by their penalties they teach the most ignorant their nature and their guilt.—But there are evils of another class; evils which lie obscured in the darkness of the human heart until instruction detects their existence and writes their character; evils which escape the periodical cognizance of courts of law, but on the principles or acts of which the laws of heaven animadvert through every moment of our being; evils which, from their nature, human codes can neither check nor contemplate, but are offences of high magnitude against that purity of which

the Scriptures are the transcripts; evils which rise from the heart, pollute the imagination, disarrange the passions, sap the principles, corrupt the whole moral man, and place him in an attitude of hostility with his Maker. This is evil in its deepest sense; and if, according to our definition, it is the business of education to enable us to judge rightly between good and evil, it must connect itself very largely with the influence and authority of religion. The sole standard of moral good and evil is the will of God; the Scriptures are the only means by which we can become fully acquainted with that will; and without their instrumentality neither can good nor evil be ascertained. To be without instruction, is to have no standard of judgment; to be left to mere human science, is to be left to standards defective, variable, and doubtful. In questions of good and evil, therefore, as in those of truth and error, we see the necessity of education being conducted by the aids of the inspired records. By them the heart is searched through all its labyrinths; by their standard alone is sin made to appear "exceeding sinful;" and in them it is connected with a future judgment and eternity. There alone is the fair form of moral beauty drawn out to its full proportions, and presented in legitimate features; and above all, it is there we are taught, that the deepest vices of constitution and of habit are vincible, and the highest range of moral command and sanctity attainable. Our disease and remedy, our fall and recovery, are there constantly and equally before us. If then the definition of education we have given be just, it is the definition of an education of which religious instruction forms the most eminent part; for by that alone can we be taught rightly to judge of the truths which most concern us, and to detect the errors which would be fatal, not to a temporary interest, but to our salvation; to discover the good needed most, because needed by the moral and immortal man; and to obtain monitory views of evil, by means which at once render it odious and evitable. Education may and ought to be more than this. In many ranks of life, it must be varied and comprehensive: we undervalue neither useful nor elegant acquirements; but if education comprise not instruction in the "things" which, before all others, "belong to our peace," it is a venerable name unfitly and deceptiously applied.—From a process so partial and defective, no moral influence can spring; it gives no virtue to the individual; it corrects no evil in society. To this the refined nations of antiquity bear mournful but instructive testimony; and why, on a subject so solemnly important to our children and to our land, is not the voice of history regarded? She has written them refined, learned, and mighty; but she has recorded their vices, and points to their desolations. If learning could have preserved them, why has their science survived their political existence, and why does it live only in other climes? Were they without that knowledge, the attainment of which we have too often considered to be the chief or the exclusive end of education? Were they destitute of genius, and taste, and arts, and philosophy? In all they are the confessed models of modern nations; and that state has the highest fame which most successfully, though still distantly, approaches them. These they wanted not, but they wanted a true religion, and a people instructed in it. The politics they erected and adorned were built like Babylon, the capital of a still older state with clay hardened only

in the sun, and which has long become a mass of ruin undistinguished from its parent earth. They were without perpetuity, because they were without the elements of it. The fabric of their grandeur has crumbled down, because it was not combined with the imperishable principles of virtue; and their want of virtue resulted from their want of religion. Shall examples, so frequently suggested to our recollection by the books of our boyhood, the studies of our riper years, and the very terms and allusions of our language, admonish us in vain? Yet, if reflection fail to teach us the absolute inadequacy of knowledge, however perfected, to sustain, without the basis of religion, either the virtues of private life, or the weight of national interests, let us suffer ourselves to be roused into conviction by evidences which are ocular and palpable. Go into your public libraries, enriched by the literature of the classical states of ancient times, and see them crowded also with their mutilated marbles, brought from the fallen monuments of their greatness, and saved from the final wastes of time and barbarism, to be placed in monitory collocation with the "wisdom of this world," mocking its imbecility; as though Providence had thereby designed to teach us, that length of days is the sole gift of that wisdom whose beginning is "the fear of the Lord," and whose great lesson is to "depart from evil." Athens mourning along the galleries of our public museums, over the frail ægis of her Minerva, admonishes us to put our trust within the shadow of the impenetrable shield of the truth of the living God.

II. We apply the principles we have attempted to establish to the institutions in which you are so actively and usefully engaged.

If literature only were considered, the pretensions and claims of Sunday school institutions would be very humble. To teach the children of the poor to read, in order that they may be able to consult, for their instruction and comfort, the holy Scriptures, is their principal and legitimate object. In some instances the art of writing is added; but in all well-regulated schools of this description, it is not taught on the Sabbath. There are teachers who, much to their honour, are willing to sacrifice one or two evenings of the week for this purpose, to maintain the sanctity of that day unimpaired, and to employ it only in services which immediately connect themselves with religious objects. Humble, however, as are their pretensions in a literary view, if our observations on the subject of education be correct, they will give, as long as their original plan was kept sacred, what may be called education, in a very important sense, to the children of the poor; and of the children trained up to knowledge and piety in well-conducted Sunday schools, (and I have sufficient information on the subject to warrant me in saying, that the majority of these institutions are conducted well,) it may be affirmed, that they are well educated. The letters they acquire are usually sufficient for the stations they attain in society; and they are taught "the fear of the Lord." If, therefore, we rank them in the first class of the institutions of the present day, for the instruction of the lower orders of society, there are not wanting sufficient reasons to justify this eulogy.

The number of children now educating in Sunday schools, is one character of their importance. A moderate calculation has stated them at half a million. This, it is true, is not such an estimate as

offers any authority to relax our efforts. Great as the exertion is, it does not reach the magnitude of the wants; for perhaps an equal number remain neglected by every educational charity. It is, nevertheless, a cheering statement. It is the work of but a few years' date; yet it has taken hold of a vast extent of public interest. Let us consider how far the good may extend; the number of families, most of whom were dark and vicious, into which a reproving light and a sanctifying leaven have been carried. Let us trace this crowd of children into all the connections they will form in life, to the families into which they must multiply, and in which the knowledge and the good principles they themselves have received will in some degree operate, and our hopes may, without any presumption, rest on results of incalculable consequence to individuals and to society.

Sunday schools derive additional consideration from their necessity. A single circumstance marks this necessity. But for them this multitude of children must, for the most part, have remained ignorant and vicious. The necessity of the case has arisen from the poverty of parents; the facility of employing children in the varied manufactures of the country; the want of provision by other and too limited charities, or from all these causes united. The fact, however, is not to be disputed. Sunday schools took the lead of those other institutions for the education of the children of the poor which are now in the most comprehensive activity; they had the honour of urging them into their present scenes of operation; but by none of them have they been superseded. This puts their necessity beyond all controversy, except with those who would rather see the poor left to a corrupting and demoralizing ignorance, than instructed in any but their own methods; and when, to add to the absurdity, they themselves have slumbered in negligence during most of the time that Sunday schools have been in operation, and are not even now prepared with the means of meeting the present necessities of the children of the poor. A periodical work of some authority has lately sounded an alarm at so great a number of children being "dry nursed in dissent." From this charge the numerous Sunday schools conducted by excellent persons of the establishment, must, of course, be excepted. Nor with less reason are you connected with Sunday schools conducted by the charity of other Christian societies, to be shielded from it. The question indeed, fairly stated, is, not where or how these neglected children are to be nursed, but whether they are to be nursed at all. Or, if the question respect different kinds of nurture, it is, whether thousands of the children of the lower classes are to have the nurture of your catechisms, your Bibles, your hymns, and your pious advices, or the nurture of vice in its lowest and most degrading forms. Were we as a country arrived at so high a state of moral improvement that our institutions made ample provision for the Christian instruction of every neglected child in the empire, then might rivalry in this work obtain some colour and excuse from the common infirmities of our nature; but in the present state of things, is it possible for us to be delicate about modes and places of instruction, provided it be Christian instruction, or the agents by which a work so pressing is conducted? Are we to pause and dispute where the children of the poor are to acquire principles of morals and religion, when a report of the legislature has so lately stated the serious fact,

that one hundred and twenty thousand children, in this metropolis alone, are destitute of education, and when the public, with its magistrates, stand appalled at the increase of juvenile depravity? But in whatever you nurture the children committed to your care, it is not true that you nurture them "in dissent." The conflicting opinions of men on a subject so difficult as that of Church government, are not introduced into your schools. You could not have the support of the public to such a system of education, were you even inclined to adopt it. Your catechisms contain those truths of religion only in which Christians, both in the establishment and out of it, agree; and by the time a child has acquired ability to read the Bible, he, in most instances, passes from under your care. Let us not then be charged with an intriguing sectarianism, while we are engaged in a work of common concern and interest. He alone is the true sectarian, who forgets that there is a common Christianity as well as a Christianity under the modification of his own party; who forgets that his duties to this common Christianity are of a higher obligation than those he owes, (and some he does owe,) to his own peculiarities; and who would see a soul of man left to perish without concern, if not saved by the application of a process of his own. In whatever religious body that man is found, he, and he alone, is the true sectarian.

The vigilant superintendence exercised over Sunday schools is another circumstance which advances them in the rank of educational charities. The activity of teachers is the energetic spring of the whole system; but as few except young persons are so discharged from domestic engagements as to have leisure to occupy the office of teacher, prudent and zealous as such persons might be, it would be an obvious defect to leave such institutions without a careful superintendence; and in fact they possess it in a degree probably superior to any, except some charities of an isolated and very limited character.—Few are the instances in which they do not occupy the care of ministers who know the books which are read, and the general methods of tuition. In all, persons of experience and worth, of confirmed religious habits, glowing with Christian charity and paternal affection, give by turns a kind and vigilant oversight of a charge so important. It is thus that their religious character is maintained, and that the spirit in which these institutions are conducted is preserved in strict accordance with the designs of the sacred day. In no case are they left to a hireling, from whom, at the best, little more could be expected than to keep the mechanism of the system in play. It is thus that the nobler feelings of the hearts of those whose love to others emanates from the love of Christ, and is fed and supported by the solemn consideration of the value of a never-dying spirit, are brought to bear with a vigour ever renewing upon the great ends of the institution.—There are in all the schools so conducted motives in operation more vigorous than that of performing a task respectably, that the hire of it may with confidence be demanded; motives which run into expedients of ceaseless variety to accomplish their objects, and refresh exertion, even while they expend it. In them the machinery of education is not composed of wheels and springs, which owe their motion to the hand or the foot, but, like those seen by the prophet, there is a "spirit in the wheels," and they are "full of eyes."

With me, I confess it is no small recommendation of these institutions, that, with few exceptions, the religious instruction they communicate is the Gospel, in all its great and elementary principles. This is found in their catechisms, in the hymns sung, in the lectures delivered; and it is fully secured by the reading of the whole Scriptures. There is no compromise with those who "deny the Lord that bought them," to exclude from elementary instruction the fallen condition of man, and that which it renders necessary, the sacrificial work of Christ, and the influences of the Holy Spirit. We rejoice indeed, as we ought, that this is not peculiar to Sunday schools; that the increasing national schools, which now give their benefits to the children of the poor, as they secure the teaching of the national faith, secure by that means their instruction in all the truths of our common religion. As to others which adopt the principle of compromise and exclusion, I hesitate not to express my suspicions as to their beneficial tendency in all cases where some collateral means are not provided to supply the deficiency; and certainly it can never be justly pleaded as a reason for giving up a single Sunday school, or for relaxing in our exertions to multiply them, that in some places the institutions alluded to may appear sufficient to meet the wants of the children of the poor. This might be true, if our youth needed nothing but the arts of reading and writing to render them virtuous and happy. We have already met this question, and in part exposed the fallaciousness of hopes of civil and personal improvement, founded on so narrow a basis. Nor is the case much altered by alleging that the morals of Christianity are taught. Is Christianity then a system of morals only? Has it no motives peculiar to itself, no sanctions, no assistances? If we believe them not, then let us profess it; if we do, let us not lend ourselves to an attempt to weaken their influence in the world; for the youth who knows them not as the first principles of his religious education will in most cases judge, that what has been taught him last in order of time is last in importance; or that what he was left to collect incidentally and by hazard is, in fact, of no importance at all. Paganism had its didactic codes; and they present views of great moral elevation.—But though they themselves remained for ages, they stood in the midst of manners ever declining for the want of religious doctrine.—They stood, but as the summit of a rock from the sides of which the vegetable mould has fallen, without soil to give root to a principle, or to support the bloom or feed the fragrance of a virtue. And what reason have we to expect more from even Christian morals? As morals, though higher in demand, and of greater authority, their principles and their influence are the same. They are commands and directions, and they are nothing beside: nor have they more efficacy without the spirit of religion, than "be ye clothed and fed," without the spirit of charity. From the morals of the Bible, merely as such, no greater influence is to be expected, than from those of Epictetus and Seneca, if motives more powerful and assistances more large cannot also be offered. Man wants power as much as direction; his hopes and his fears are the sinews of his virtue; and when even his mind is instructed, he is motionless to the right until he feels the life of love. "We love him because he first loved us." Here is the spring of morality,—the heart of the whole system of Christian morals is the

love of Christ. No education is religious in any Christian sense without the knowledge of the Gospel, and the hope of its practical influence rests therefore on the careful and full communication of its leading doctrines. To take the morals of the New Testament, and to discard its faith, is to sever the tree from the root while it is yet in bloom. The hues may be admired, and the fragrance be for a time as a field "which the Lord hath blessed;" but "their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

To the character of Sunday school teachers it is impossible, on such an occasion as this, not to pay a tribute of respect; and their character adds another proof of the efficiency of the institutions themselves. In the great number who have thus devoted themselves to the gratuitous instruction of poor children, some will of course be found without the requisite qualities of sobriety, affection, piety, and patience; the only elements from which the moral part of the character of a useful teacher can be formed. The greater the number of human agents employed in any work, the greater display will there be of that infirmity which is common to our nature. But it is an animating consideration, that the great body of Sunday school teachers are taken from among those of our youth who from childhood "have known the Holy Scriptures," and by them have been made "wise unto salvation." If a large school of the children of the poor, assembled on a Sunday, singing the praises of the great Lord of the Sabbath and the lover of children, reading his word, or marching in procession to his house, be a sight on which the eye cannot fall without transmitting a thrill of delighted sensibility through the benevolent affections; it is a sight scarcely less interesting and welcome, to behold young people in different classes of society devoting themselves to communicate the instruction, and to accomplish the religious objects, of the institutions which have adopted them.—Their self denial is at least presumptive of their piety. They withhold their feet from the walks of pleasure on the day of the Lord; they sacrifice the enjoyments of the family circle in the intervals of public worship; and many of them give their constant attendance at schools, whose occupations through the week require a severe confinement.—Thus to make the day of rest from worldly labour a day of laborious application to the duties of charity argues no small degree of active benevolence toward man, and of interest in the honour and the cause of God. From teachers of such a character; from more than sixty-five thousand agents under the influence of these sentiments, engaged every Sabbath in implanting the first principles of religious doctrine in the minds of children in every part of the country, teaching them the sanctity and obligation of the Sabbath; forming them to the habit of attending the public worship of almighty God; furnishing their memories with moral maxims, applicable to the various duties of civil and social life; and watching over their improvement with a solicitude cherished by affection and religious zeal; from the efforts of such teachers, the best moral effects are to be expected. No other institutions, in so great an extent, can exhibit an agency so qualified and so efficient to counteract the tendencies of corrupted human nature; to form habits of industry, probity, and morals; and diffuse them through the neglected part of the community.

To these commendations is to be added, the end that crowns the means,—success. This is no longer doubtful; and the degree of it which, by the blessing of God, has been given, may be enjoyed with as little alloy as the condition of things can admit. Evil often lies by the side of good; and there are consequences in many instances which follow even virtuous exertions, which much diminish the value and the joy of accomplishing their object. This is less the case in Sunday schools, rightly regulated, than in most other charities. The effects of them are most favourable to civil happiness; they secure often the higher interests of the soul and eternity; and it would be difficult to point out any unlooked-for reaction unfavourable or counteractive to the whole design. Those who are not raised to the moral condition which has been hoped are, at least, made no worse. No youth, however dissipated, can sin more fearlessly or desperately for having had the fear of God planted in his heart in infancy. It is by the degree of religious information given to the understanding, that conscience acquires direction and authority; and he sins neither so fast nor so hopelessly who is under her constant check, and is obliged to listen in every hour of solitude to her reproofs and admonitions. Truth has its preventive as well as its corrective office; but from what individuals and the nation are saved by Sunday school institutions, must be left to the revelations of a future day. This is a track of beneficent operation which the human eye cannot follow, because the benefit is negative.—Of positive good we have abundant evidence; and it affords one of the most interesting inducements for perseverance and enlarged exertion in this department of benevolence. The grateful testimonies of masters, parents, and neighbours, which your reports from year to year contain, are before the public: but this is only a small part of the proof. Rude and immoral neighbourhoods and villages have assumed an orderly aspect, and astonish those by the contrast who are able to make the comparison between their present and former state. Numerous instances have occurred where the light and influence of religion have been carried from the school into the family from which the scholar was taken; and hoary age, apparently confirmed in habits of irreligion, has learned from instructed infancy to read the Scriptures, and to seek the house of God. You whose eyes have watched the effects of your schools, because your hearts are interested in them, have traced the children of your classes into future life, and into orderly habits, and respectable connections. And where is the Christian society to which a well-regulated Sunday school has been attached, but numbers among its most pious members many who there first learned the name of God and the obligations of religion? This is success under its highest and most important aspects. We grant, that the civil advantages of these charities are very numerous and considerable. As long as industry, morality, order, and submission to the laws, are national benefits, the support of Sunday schools must be deemed a work of patriotism as well as piety: but they reach far higher; their direct tendency is to bring their little children to Christ; and it will be found at the great day, that of many such is the kingdom of heaven.

Such are the views of the necessity and importance of Sunday schools, which the most indubitable facts warrant us to entertain; but

though they may be properly urged as reasons for the continued support of the public; though they are mentioned on this occasion to encourage your exertions, whether friends, visiters, or teachers; they will, I hope, be considered as reasons why, with the greatest fidelity and seriousness, you should exert yourselves to maintain the present character of the institutions; to attach them rigidly to their original principle; and to mark and correct any aberration which may have taken place. On you has descended a very sacred trust. To you it is left to impel an important device of active charity into the play of wider and more vigorous action, or to check its benign energy, and turn it from its course. Yours is no common charge. You may keep up the bustle of activity, you may sound the note of preparation for new efforts, you may present us with the array of numbers, and the apparatus of tuition; but if once you are betrayed by those vague and false notions of the moral efficacy of mere instruction in letters, which have had already too much countenance in the world, you betray this cause. You extinguish its vivifying spirit; you remove the cup of salvation; you disregard the voice of Christ, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." On this subject you will permit me to be explicit, because I feel its importance. A Sunday school which does not, as its principal object, teach religion; which does not subordinate every thing to that object; which does not rigorously judge of every part of its management by its moral influence; which does not exclude every thing secular; which does not accustom its children to the habitual public worship of God; (for school worship is not public worship;) which does not carefully teach the Scriptures; and which has not the vigilance and cares of piety as well as of zeal, is not worth supporting. No moral effects can be expected from it. If these, its proper objects, be only partially regarded, or mixed with others of a counteracting kind, the good produced will be neutralized, and labour and bounty be expended in vain; if they are in any great degree neglected, the evil will predominate. We may raise the intellectual character; but, unless the moral man have an equal culture and growth, we produce only disease, deformity, and death.

To engage you therefore constantly and perseveringly in the serious and religious direction of the schools under your care, let us,

III. Consider the speaking and expressive action of our Lord, as recorded in the text.

"And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them." This action might well be put in the place of a long discourse. It has an emphasis more powerful than speech; it at once enlightens our reason and moves our hearts. "He took a child." Such an object seldom fails to excite kind and tender emotions. In a child we see freedom from actual transgression; and, consequently, innocence, affection, dependence, docility, soft and unruffled enjoyment. These are the characters of children which engage our regards; but they are by this action of Christ exhibited to us, as though to remind us the more forcibly that all these qualities are daily exposed to new dangers. The more we admire the beauty and delicacy of the blossom, the greater reason is there to guard against the blight and the frosts which lie in wait to wither it. "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child." It is yet "bound up," but it is there; and, without your care, awful may be

its development. "Out of the heart of man," He said who only fully knows it, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." The seeds of all these vices lie hidden in the heart even of an infant, and wait but culture and opportunity to start up and cover the accursed soil. O deceitful countenance of infancy! what art thou but a summer sea, bright, placid, and inviting, but how quickly to yield to the storm, to darken and to frown, and to behold thyself surrounded with the wrecks of innocence, peace, and virtue! These storms will rise; but they need not necessarily devour. They are not uncontrollable. Into your hands, who devote yourselves to the care of the children of your schools, God has committed a power over these moral elements. To the voice of human eloquence they will be deaf; but they know to obey the commissioned rod of Moses, of prophets, and evangelists. To you is assigned the office of fixing, in the depths of the heart, principles which shall render it less yielding to the impulses which would bear upon it with irresistible force, and urge it onward to destruction, in ungovernable tides and waves of passion. To you belongs the duty of introducing truths into the mind, whose voice will be heard and command attention even in a mind tossed and heaved with temptation; and in how many cases, you will never know till the day of eternity, will that Saviour, whom you teach the children committed to your care to know and reverence, walk to them on the waters, and in the very crisis of their danger say to the winds, "Peace, be still!"

"He took a child, and set him in the midst of them," and said, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, shall not enter therein." There must, then, be something in the character of a child to encourage your exertions, or it could not have been exhibited as an example to adult disciples. This is confirmed by experience. There are certain natural virtues of childhood upon which the diligent and observant instructer may engraft moral ones; and if the blessing of God be sought, he shall not be disappointed in the attempt. Deeply as we are fallen, evil does not at once usurp unlimited sway; and that space may be afforded for the application of a Christian education, our natural corruption is not suffered to acquire maturity but by a gradual process. God has impressed this law upon sin itself, that he may encourage and invite the efforts of parents and Christian teachers. Seize then "this sweet hour of prime," the most hopeful and important in human life. A child is yet the creature of imitation: hold up, then, the example of "whatsoever things are pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report." "If there be any virtue, any praise," let it be presented to the understanding, let it meet the eye, let it be urged upon the heart. The matter is yet plastic: let a mould be prepared to receive it, which bears the character you would wish it permanently to present, when it becomes fixed and unyielding. The child is still under authority, the mind bends to superior years and rank: be your authority, then, ranged on the side of Heaven, and the influence of it may be everlasting. As yet the passions are unawakened, the shocks of temptation are feeble, the enemy is at a distance: improve the opportunity. Lay the foundation of the moral superstructure deep in the fear of God and the love of Christ; and "though the winds shall blow, and the rains descend, and the waves beat upon that house" you may

be amply rewarded for past, and be encouraged to future labours, when you see it stand in the eventful trial of its foundation; because you have "built it upon a rock."

"And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them." But the interest of this action is heightened by other and stronger lights than those in which we have hitherto viewed it. Yesterday that child was nothing; but when will it cease to be? Never! Immortality is written upon it, and the inscription is indelible, for it was traced by the finger of God. The mind has but begun its play; its instincts and its faculties but now move with incipient life. Even dull and worthless matter is of older date. "Of old thou didst lay the foundation of the earth." Ages of history passed before it was said of him, "A child is born into the world." History will continue its annals, matter its combinations, the heavens their course; but he shall survive them all. The revolutions of ages shall be forgotten, the high events of life chase each other from the stage, "the fashion of this world pass away;" a period may arrive when it shall require an effort of even a perfected memory to recall the events accounted the most important on earth; "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise," and leave the spaces they have occupied to silence and to nothing; but the child set in the midst of us "shall then *be*." The basis of its existence cannot be shaken; but in those countless ages which its existence must fill, never let it be forgotten that it will be a happy spirit before the throne of God, or a hopeless outcast from his heaven. What then, if it depend on you in any degree to stamp bliss on that immortality, "to save a soul from death," can I call forth your pious cares in the service of the institutions you have espoused, by a more powerful motive; by a motive of which you can be more sensible? I know that other motives of great power are in operation, and I would not undervalue them. Your triumphs are in the first order of civil and moral achievements; but they all terminate here,—"to save a soul from death" is the crowning conquest. You save from great and afflictive vices; that is much. You preserve that virgin innocence from pollution; you spare the feelings of that mother who might, but for your institutions, have been doomed to count her days of grief, and nights of anguish, by the pulsations of a broken heart. You rescue that youth from habits of destructive folly and shame, "from the strange woman whose house leads to death, and whose feet take hold of hell." You purge the mass out of which a future generation is to be formed, and prepare elements for a better state of society; but the power of doing more than this is given you, and the very possibility of influencing the eternal felicity of a spirit of man never to lose its being or its consciousness, is animating, and ought to arouse your energy and give perseverance to its application. What, if you are the honoured instruments of giving any considerable proportion of the immortal spirits committed in infancy to your care, to the Churches of Christ on earth, and to the general assembly of heaven! This is not mere possibility; it is probable; in some cases it is certain. It has been done already. You see adults, once the children of your schools, "walking in the truth," giving encouraging hopes of perseverance and eternal salvation. Your reports contain affecting accounts of the pious and hopeful deaths of many of your children of different ages. You have witnessed in them a perfect patience, an

ardent love of the Saviour, a strong and cheering faith in his mercy. You have commended them with sure and certain hope, in their last moments, to Him who, in heaven as on earth, hath said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for verily I say unto you, that their angels," or spirits, "do always behold the face of their Father which is in heaven." This is the lofty prize for which you run; and this is the honour which God sometimes puts upon your "work of faith, and labour of love."

Finally. You are encouraged by a declaration in the text, the import of which many of you, I am sure, will duly appreciate: "Whosoever receiveth one of such children in my name, receiveth me." To receive children to instruct them merely in human learning would not certainly be receiving them in his name. That implies much more. But when you receive them to instruct in his religion, to lead them to him as their Saviour, to train them up in his nurture and admonition, you receive them in his name; and in so doing you "receive him." He will not be unmindful of your pious cares for those he loves. You "are a blessing" to them; and the action will reciprocate,—"you shall be blessed;" you shall receive him; you shall be his care; "your seed shall be blessed upon earth; and your horn shall he exalt with honour" in his Churches. Go, then, with redoubled zeal to your great work. Extend your institutions, and bind them anew to the altars of your God, by which only they can be sanctified. Convey light and blessing into families yet dark and wretched; and seek the sheep which are yet in the wilderness. The blessing of God be upon your work. May it prosper in your hands. May you save souls from death, and prevent or cover a multitude of sins. Take with you our wishes, our earnest prayers; and take what is more important to you than these, the encouragement of the text, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth not me only, but him that sent me."

Sermon IV.—*Man Magnified by the Divine Regard.*

"What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?" Job vii, 17.

It is the character of almost all speculative systems of unbelief, that, while they palliate or excuse the moral pravity of our nature, they depreciate and undervalue that nature itself.

By some of them it is denied that "there is a spirit in man:" the lofty distinction between mind and matter is confounded; and the organization of a clod is thought sufficient to give birth to reason and feeling; to all that dignifies the nature of man in comparison with the capacities of animals.

If a few allow that this frame, disorganized by death, shall live again by a resurrection, and thus only make death a parenthesis in our being, the majority take a wider sweep into speculative impiety; pluck off the crown of immortality which was placed upon the head of

human nature by the trinity in council; and doom him who in this life feels that he but begins to live, to live no more. Thus death is not the mere parenthesis, but the period of life; the volume closes at the preface; and vice exults at the news, that this portal of our present existence leads only to airy, empty nothingness.

Another stratagem of the philosophy which has no faith, is to persuade us that we are but atoms in the mass of beings; and that to suppose ourselves noticed by the Great Supreme, either in judgment or in mercy, is an unfounded and presumptuous conceit. With David, there are persons who lead us out to survey the ample cope of the firmament, "the moon and the stars" which God "hath ordained," and cry, not like him in adoring wonder at the fact, but in the spirit of a base and groveling unbelief, "What is man, that" God "should be mindful of him?"

The word of God stands in illustrious and cheering contrast to all these chilling and vicious speculations. As to our moral condition, it lays us deep in the dust, and brings down every high imagination. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." In our unregenerate state, we are represented as capable of no good, and incapable of no evil. But it never abases our nature itself. In this sacred record, this testimony of God, man is the head and chief of the system he inhabits, and the image of God. He is arrayed in immortality, and invested with high and even awful capacities both of good and evil. Nay, more; low as he may be reduced by sickness and poverty, his interest in his Maker's regards continues unbroken and unforfeited. So in the text, Job, poor, diseased, unpitied, and forsaken, sees the hand, yes, and the heart of God, in his trouble; and in a strain of devout gratitude exclaims, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him!"

This is an important subject, and just views respecting it are connected with important practical results. That we may be truly humbled, we ought indeed fully to enter into those descriptions which the Scriptures have given us of our fallen condition; to every one of which we shall find our experience to answer, even "as face answers to face in a glass." But we are to remember both from whence we are fallen, and what we are capable of regaining by the grace of God; the mercy which he who made us is still disposed to exercise; and the natural powers which it is the object of that mercy to raise, sanctify, and direct; that, animated by this display of Divine goodness both in creation and redemption, we may "lay hold on the hope set before us," and be roused to the pursuit of that "glory, honour, and immortality" which are not only hopeful, but certain to all who seek them.

It is proposed, therefore,

I. To offer some illustrations of the doctrine of the text, that God "magnifies" man, and "sets his heart" upon him.

II. To point out the practical improvement which flows from facts so established, and so expressive of the Divine benignity.

I. We call your attention to certain considerations illustrative of the doctrine of the text.

1. God hath "magnified" man by the gift of an intellectual nature.

This circumstance, as illustrative of the Divine goodness, and of our obligation to grateful affection and a right conduct, is frequently

adverted to in Scripture. He hath "made us to know more than the beasts of the field, and to be wiser than the fowls of heaven."—"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." In the process of forming this lower world, and the system connected with it, various degrees of creating grace, so to speak, were dispensed. This was righteous; no creature has any claim to being at all, nor to any particular mode or circumstance of being; and, therefore, the dispensation of existence in various modes was wholly at the pleasure of the Creator; and none has the right petulantly to say to him, "Why am I thus?" It was also wise; being necessary to variety, as variety is necessary to perfection. We see, therefore, in this vast mass of created beings, unorganized matter without life; matter organized, as in vegetables, with life, but without sensation; and, in the inferior animals, with life, sense, and a portion of knowledge, but without reason. But in man, the scale rises unspeakably higher; and his endowments are extended beyond mere animal life and sensation, however delicate and varied, and beyond instinct, whatever that mysterious power may be, to a rational soul, to deep and various mental affections, and to immortality itself. Here, then, we see him magnified. Amidst all the beings which surround us in this visible universe, he alone is capable of surveying the whole with thought and reflection; of tracing the Author of the whole work, and marking the display of his perfections; of yielding to him adoration and homage; of sanctifying the varied scene to moral uses; or, of improving his capacity;—and he alone is susceptible of the sentiment of religion. And as God has thus "magnified" him, he has also "set his heart upon him." Man is the only visible creature in the heavens, and in the earth, which God, in the proper sense of the word, could love; for no creature is capable of being loved but one which is also capable of reciprocal knowledge, regard, and intercourse.—Other things might be approved, and pronounced "very good;" but man alone was loved. He was the only being with whom the Maker of all could hold intercourse. Him, therefore, he admitted into fellowship; with him he conversed thought to thought, and made his presence vital, and interiorly sensible to him; delighting in him, and teaching him to delight in God. The same regards he has to us, though fallen; and, by methods we shall afterward mention, still seeks man as his beloved son, invites him to his forgiving bosom, and makes the human heart his favoured and his chosen temple.

2. God has "magnified" man by the variety, and the superior nature of the pleasures of which he has made him capable.

His are the pleasures of contemplation. These the inferior animals have not. No subjects but such as are urged upon them by present necessity engage their thoughts. Their view of present things is also limited. The most splendid scenes of nature are thrown around them without arousing attention, or awakening taste, and the power of comparison. The past would seem to be a perfect blank to them; the future derives no light from the analogies which observation and experience furnish to man, and by which its gloom is somewhat broken. Moral subjects and moral actions, which furnish to us so inexhaustible a source of thought, are to them unknown; nor is it indicated by any of the phenomena which those that approach nearest to

intellectual character exhibit, that the cause of any thing whatever is with them a matter of the least curiosity. All these are the subjects of human contemplation. As far as we can perceive, they are also inexhaustible; and the powers which we may apply to them are capable of unmeasurable enlargement. From this wondrous capacity arises a pleasure as copious as it is rich and invigorating, whenever the choice of subjects is worthy, and our train of thinking well laid. The deep and continued abstractions of profound genius, the ardour and intensity of the poet, the patient labour of the inventor of useful or curious machines, the command which books and conversation exercise over intellectual men, prove the vigour of the pleasure which arises from well-directed mental exercises; and in all this the benevolence of God is affectingly manifested. He has "taught us to know," and has opened to us the felicity of knowing; a felicity to which the pleasures of sense, though they also are proofs of his benevolence, bear no comparison, either in loftiness or duration. In the one we have a pleasure in common with all animal natures; in the other we share the felicities of angels, and the blessedness of God himself.

His are the pleasures of devotion. And can it be rationally denied that devotion is the source of even a still higher pleasure than knowledge? Does it arise from awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty? If a sense of our reconciliation to God accompany it, it is the awe of bending and silent seraphs, which gives depth and richness to the joys of the spirit, but is not inconsistent with them. Does it express itself in praise for mercies? It is gratitude directed to the highest Benefactor, and called into liveliest exercise by the magnificence of his mercies; and gratitude is a pleasurable emotion, and the more so as it is more intense. Thus it affected the mind of David: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" Is the devotion private? Then intercourse with God is the intercourse of friendship, rendered more tender and confiding by a filial confidence; every burden is discharged, every wish freely expressed, and the soul's peace is fed and constantly guarded by a confidential correspondence. Does the devotional principle seek expression in the courts of the house of our God? New circumstances are added to deepen the impression, and enlarge the joy. With "a multitude" of consentaneous hearts we "keep holiday;" with them we joy to acknowledge and proclaim the God we love before a forgetful world; we have a sense of delightful communion with the Church on earth, wherever its members are found, and with the redeemed and angelic throngs in heaven. The calm Sabbath is at once "a day honourable and full of delights," and a pleasing emblem of cessation from earthly cares, and of those exclusive, hallowed, and spiritual employments which are reserved for the spirits of just men made perfect.

His are the pleasures of sympathy and benevolence; and to man they are peculiar. No inferior nature, however near its apparent approach to him, is capable of them. It is a source of enjoyment, paradoxical as it may appear on a superficial view, to feel that we can "weep with them that weep," and thus ally ourselves to the common nature, and the common lot, of man. Even our most painful sympathies for others prepare the heart to receive direct consolation itself by the sensibility from which they flow, and which they call into

exercise, and preserve susceptible. The spring of benevolence is thus opened; the stream flows whenever its refreshment can be imparted; and from thence arises the satisfaction of doing good to the bodies and to the souls of men; the joy of instructing the ignorant, of recovering the lost, of guarding the feeble, of protecting the innocent, and of giving impulse to institutions of usefulness, and vigour to great plans for the benefit of nations, and the whole race of man itself.

His are the pleasures of hope. These, too, are not only his in a more high and excellent sense, but they are his exclusively. Nothing but man looks beyond the present, and the glow of hope was reserved to warm his bosom alone. How great is the exuberance of the Divine goodness to us in this respect! Many of the blessings which God hath designed for us are known; and by anticipation they are tasted beforehand, and are thus many times enjoyed. If we are the objects of his favour, the future is ever brightening to the eye of meditation. Our steps shall be guided by an infallible counsel; our good and our evil shall be distributed with kind and wise parental regard; firmness supplied by him shall raise us above our trials, and victory crown our conflicts. Another world is enlightened by its own peculiar glories; and presents the glorified body, the spirit in immediate union with God, the absence of all evil, and the consummation of all the good enjoyed in this present life. And though there are objects of hope which are unknown, because "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," yet this only heightens the emotion; the good toward which it reaches is unbounded and ineffable; it surpasses thought, and escapes the combining power of the imagination itself: it is unknown, because it transcends, not because it is unreal; and this indefinite good embodies itself, in order that it may be seized by hope, in some form of expression as indefinite as itself, but which suggests the loftiest, deepest, amplest thoughts of a mysterious glory and blessedness: "It doth not appear what we shall be;" but "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

These observations afford a sufficient answer to those who would degrade man; shame him out of his confidence in his Maker, by instituting a comparison between him and the vastness of inanimate nature; and thus endeavour to overwhelm him by a sense of his individual insignificance. But, extend the limits of the material universe as you may; make every star a sun, and every sun the centre of an expansive system of secondary luminaries, sweeping the immeasurable spaces with their orbits; what is there in all this parade and pomp of amplification to lower, in the smallest possible degree, the sentiment of the text, and to weaken its delightful and reviving impression upon our minds? This universe of material things cannot think; no sensation thrills through any part of it; it is totally unconscious of itself. The sun knows not his own splendour, nor the lightnings their force, nor the air its refreshing qualities. The earthly world has no communion with God, nor God with it. It yields to his hand without perception; it obeys without a principle of choice. It was not made for its own sake, but for the sake of that very being who can think, and feel, and adore; the sun to warm, the earth to sustain and feed, the air to refresh him; it has beauty for his eye, and music for his ear, and grandeur to elevate and fill his spirit, and curious contrivances and

phenomena of power and majesty, to lead his thoughts to the wondrous Artificer, and to prostrate his affections in his presence, under the weight of joy and awe. Let infidelity contemptuously display her planets, and their spacious sweeps; we show the being who enumerates the objects with which they are filled, marks their wondrous concatenation, and their series of secondary causes and effects, exults in their light, meditates in their darkness, measures their orbits, tracks them in their courses, connects them all with God their Maker, makes them subservient to morals, religion, devotion, hope, and confidence, and takes up, at every new discovery, the song of the morning stars, —the angel witnesses of the birth of material nature, who sang together when the laying of the foundations of the earth presented a new and heretofore unconceived manifestation of the wisdom, power, and bounty of the Godhead. Which, we ask, is the greater,—the single being, whether man or angel, who sees, and knows, and admires, and is instructed by this dread magnificence of nature; or that nature itself, which knows neither that it is magnificent, nor that it exists at all? The argument is turned upon the objector, and the greatness of nature only proves the greatness of man.

And suppose this vast assemblage of worlds to be inhabited by beings as rational as ourselves, what does this avail to prove us "insects" and "reptiles?"—the rank which the ambition of infidelity would assign to man. It is asked, indeed, What are we among so many? The answer is, Just what we should be if we existed alone, —the same rational, sentient, improvable, immortal beings, whom God has "magnified," and on whom "he has set his heart." Numbers can have no tendency to lower the individual; nor many races of spiritual beings, to lower each separate race. Holiness is not less valuable to me, as the source of peace, and hope, and confidence, because millions are holy; nor sin less destructive and painful, if millions have caught the infection. Is a father's love, or a mother's tenderness, diminished because the family is numerous? And yet some such monstrous supposition must be assumed before the conclusions of this heartless, godless, and hopeless philosophy could be established.

In the rank, then, and supereminence of man, we may justly say, that "the gentleness of God hath made him great;" and his delight in him is such that he has made him deathless. Every material object changes; even animals, which have a portion of mind die; "The spirit of a beast goeth downward;" but the spirit of man "goeth upward" to Him that made it, to rest in his bosom, and to abide in his presence. How great a proof is immortality that God "hath set his heart" upon us! He would not lose us by the extinction of our being, and to that spirit which God hath made, and from which he will never withdraw the communion of his presence and love, the very words may be applied, which so strikingly characterize his own immortality, —"These shall perish; but thou remainest; and these all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

3. The text receives its most striking illustration from the conduct of God to man considered as a sinner. If under this character we have still been loved; if still, notwithstanding ingratitude and rebellion, we are loved; then, in a most emphatic sense, in a sense which we

cannot adequately conceive or express, God hath "set his heart' upon us.

We must not hide it from you, that all those capacities and endowments of a spiritual and immortal nature, to which we have just adverted, may become the bane and curse of all, and have actually become a terrible inheritance to many. A rational nature is capable of evil, and, being liable to evil, is liable to punishment. We may speculate on the origin of evil, on moral liberty, necessity, and other similar subjects as we may; but the awful fact remains the same,—we are thus liable. This seems to arise out of our freedom of choice, without which our nature must have been constituted essentially different, and, it would seem also, greatly inferior. No rational creature perishes but by his own fault; but he may perish. As to man the case is determined, the line has been passed; he has fallen, he is under wrath, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is become guilty before God. Here, then, the doctrine of the text comes forth in all its tenderness. We have two facts before us: the human race has become liable to the penalty of sin, to all the miseries which a great and an immortal nature can suffer; and yet, because God hath "set his heart" upon him, the whole of this terrible punishment may be remitted, and a restoration to grace and felicity be attained. How is this? Mark the means of our reconciliation to God, and mark the result; "and at each step let higher wonder rise."

Reflect upon the means.

The great agent of our recovery was the eternal Son of God, who voluntarily became the representative of the whole sinning race, was incarnated, humbled to a low and despised condition, suffered in our stead intolerable torments, and died the universal sacrifice and atonement for the sins of men. So God "set his heart" upon man, that for our rescue he spared not his own Son. "Dear" as he was to him, he spared him not. "Dear" in his humanity; for it was unstained with the original taint of fallen human nature, and through life was sanctified to God in a course of perfect and cheerful obedience: "dear," for the generous manner in which that human nature consented, with the Divine, to an obedience which was to extend to death, "even the death of the cross:" "dear," as the temple of the Divine nature, of the second person of the Godhead, and that person infinitely dear, as "his own," "his proper Son," "the Son of his love;" yet he "spared" him not. "It" even "pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief." What words are these! The love of God to man surmounted even that natural anxiety to preserve an object so beloved as his own Son, from ignominy, and grief, and deep and awful suffering; the innocent was given for the guilty, and the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. "So God loved the world;" and so in that hour of darkness he set his love on man. "Herein," says St. John, "is love." Where shall we go for manifestations of the tenderness, the sympathy, the benignity of God? The philosopher of this world leads us to nature, its benevolent final causes, and kind contrivances to increase the sum of animal happiness; and there he stops,—with half his demonstration! But the apostle leads us to the Gift bestowed by the Father for the sake of the recovery of man's intellectual and moral nature, and to the cross endured by the

Son, on this high behalf. Go to the heavens, which canopy man with grandeur, cheer his steps with successive light, and mark his festivals by their chronology; go to the atmosphere, which invigorates his spirits, and is to him the breath of life; go to the smiling fields, decked with verdure for his eye, and covered with fruits for his sustenance; go to every scene which spreads beauty before his gaze, which is made harmoniously vocal to his ear, which fills and delights the imagination by its glow or by its greatness; we travel with you, we admire with you, we feel and enjoy with you, we adore with you, but we stay not with you. We hasten onward in search of a demonstration more convincing, that "God is love;" and we rest not till we press into the strange, the mournful, the joyful scenes of Calvary, and amidst the throng of invisible and astonished angels, weeping disciples, and the mocking multitude, under the arch of the darkened heaven, and with earth trembling beneath our feet, we gaze upon the meek, the resigned, but fainting Sufferer, and exclaim, "Herein is love,"—herein, and no where else is it so affectingly, so unequivocally demonstrated,—"not that we loved God; but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Mark the result.

The great consequence of the propitiatory death of Christ is, that God is so reconciled as to offer pardon and eternal life to all mankind. The whole race is taken into a new relation to God, a relation of mercy. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The whole trinity is employed in this work of grace,—in offering and dispensing mercy, and grace, and salvation; in illuminating, sealing, and sanctifying; in comforting, aiding, and counselling; and a most sweet and harmonious agreement exists between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to "set their heart" on man, to restore him to their blessed communion, and to fit him for the eternal presence of their ineffable glory.

4. This being the new relation in which we stand to God "through the death of his Son," let us finally on this part of the subject, consider the means by which his gracious purpose of "magnifying man," by raising him out of his fallen condition, is pursued and effected.

(1.) He has, with the kindest regard for our higher interests, attached emptiness to worldly good, and misery to vice.

This explains the suffering which is in the world. Who can solve the problem, that man not yet finally condemned, not yet placed in the state required by an exact and extreme justice, should yet be in a suffering condition? Not the "wise of this world." It has puzzled every sage in every age of time, and led to an endless variety of speculations and corrupt superstitions. But our text solves it. Why is there emptiness in worldly good? Because God would "magnify" man, and raise him from low pursuits, he has made all on earth vain and unsubstantial. Because he "sets his heart" upon him, he would deliver him from vice, and has therefore made every evil passion, temper, and appetite, the source of bitterest misery. Had he been careless of our welfare, could "his heart" have consented to our ruin, he would have left us, like the brute, to be satisfied with our pleasure, nor would any complaining have been heard in the rich pasture. Had not the pain of sin been intended as a remedy, it would have been accompa-

med with utter despair, or never have been felt; the sting would have lain inert and powerless under the pleasure, till another world should awaken it from its torpor, and envenom it with a poison for which there shall be no healing.

(2.) In pursuance of the same design of munificent goodness, it has pleased God to establish a constant connection between our discipline and correction, between his providential dispensations and moral ends. Man is placed under rule; but the end proposed is the exercise of grace and mercy.

Are we prosperous? "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Are we afflicted? See the end: "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him; that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, that he may keep back his soul from the pit."

(3.) For the same reason, and that he may show that he hath "set his heart" upon man, he hath opened his ears to our prayers, and invites them both by commands and promises: nor does a prayer ascend from the heart of a human creature which he does not regard.

Does oppression wring from the labouring and overcharged heart of any of his creatures the agonizing appeal to heaven? "I have heard, I have heard," is his response to Israel, groaning under Egyptian taskmasters. Does it ascend from the widow and the orphan? "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation."

Is prayer offered when men are pressed on every side with worldly calamities and dangers? How many striking instances of kind regard to prayer in such circumstances are furnished to us in Psalm cvii! See a company of travellers fainting amidst a boundless expanse of burning sand in an eastern desert. "Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted within them; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he heard them, and he delivered them out of their distresses, and he led them forth by a right way." Behold a number of captives "sitting in darkness, being bound in affliction and iron." Could language draw the colour of their lot more deeply? But they too "cry unto the Lord in their trouble;" and when "they fell down, and there was none to help, he saved them out of their distresses; he brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bonds in sunder."

Behold the afflicted: "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death; then they cry unto the Lord, and he saveth them; he sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

See the affrighted mariners in a storm at sea: "They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble: they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses; he maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still: then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Well may we say, at such instances of the Divine regard to the voice of man, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

But his regard to the prayer of man, on whom he has "set his

heart," is not confined to deliverance from outward calamities, and the supply of worldly blessings. Let penitent man approach him, laden as he may be with the guilt of his offences, conscious of his entire unworthiness, and the unworthiness of all his services, acknowledging his desert of punishment, but yet pleading the atonement of his Saviour, laying hold upon the horns of the altar of his cross, smiting upon his breast and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Will he plead against him with his great power? No; but he will put strength in him." "He will remember his covenant;" he will pass by, and proclaim his name, "The Lord, merciful and gracious;" and the broken-hearted, humbled, and believing man, healed, and cheered, and comforted in his God, "shall go down to his house justified." And with respect to the covenanted right of prayer how large is the grant to believers,—"All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!" "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing let your requests be made known unto God." "Whatsoever you ask in my name, the Father will do it for you." Such is another of those wondrous means, by which the redeeming purpose is carried into effect; God "sets his heart" on man to "magnify him;" and in order to this he opens to him his throne of grace, he listens to the expression of all his wants, he gives him access to his own fulness of grace and glory, and "fulfils all his petitions."

(4.) But to bring men to feel their own wants, and to influence them by the displays of his "abundant mercy," he sends forth his Gospel, accompanied with his quickening Spirit, thus to render it what in the mere letter it could not be, "the word of life," and the "Gospel of salvation." Thus God is ever speaking to man by his word, whether written or preached, according to his institution and appointment: and, next to the gift of his Son, can we have a greater proof that he hath "set his heart" upon us? It is not enough to satisfy his compassion, that the means, the apparatus of our salvation, so to speak, is prepared; we see him carrying it into effect by a gracious application. He warns, that he may deter us from evil; presses his invitations, that we may be "compelled to come in;" and seeks, that he may save. What an illustration of the kindness of God our Saviour is the written and the preached Gospel! It is the voice of God ever calling his creature to return to him, assuring him of acceptance, exhibiting the highest blessings of grace and sanctity, and displaying the "eternal weight of glory." What variety of examples have we in that word to instruct in abstract truth by a variety of action! What variety of exquisite and impressive style! What majesty and terror! What gentleness and condescension! And the obvious final cause of the whole is, that by pardon, adoption, sanctification, and "instruction in righteousness," every man may be "magnified" by being made "a man of God, perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good work." Such, then, is man; and thus has God "set his heart upon him."

Having shown what man is, according to the Scriptural account, and how God hath "magnified" him, we proposed,

II. To point out the practical improvement which flows from facts so established, and so illustrative of the Divine benignity.

We are taught the folly and voluntary degradation of the greater part of the unhappy race of mankind. God hath "set his heart" upon

them; but they set not their heart upon God, and add to their sin the guilt of the deepest ingratitude. "Ye that forget God," is their sad, but accurate description; for how obviously true is the charge! His works, magnificent and numerous and curious as they are, bring him not to mind; nor their daily mercies received from him; nor their occasional corrections. In the world which God hath made and filled with his glory, man is "without God;" and in the world which he hath redeemed and filled with the sound of the glad tidings, he is "without Christ." His thoughts are not won by the wisdom of the redeeming mystery; nor his affections by its display of love ineffable and boundless. He has, as we have seen, the greatest capacities of nature; capacities, to the improvement of which no bound can be set; and he wholly occupies them in trifles. The greatest good is set before him, the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and the renewal of his nature; but he has "no heart to it;" and the invitation of his Saviour is disregarded, because his taste is vitiated, and he neither "discerns" nor affects "the things of God." They open to him the highest pleasures, because they secure the manifestation of the Divine favour to the heart, the presence of the Holy Spirit himself as "the Comforter," and access to God in prayer, and solemn transporting meditation; but he prefers vain society, vain shows, vain converse, and animal gratifications. Even eternal life, with all its nobleness and grandeur of prospect, awakens no desire, and excites to no effort. "Lord, what" then "is man, that thou art" still "mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him!" Why art thou not wearied with his perverseness, his delays, his insensibility? O infinite forbearance and patience! Still thou settest thine heart upon him; still thou sayest, "How shall I give thee up?" Still thine inviting voice, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord," pursues him through all his wanderings from thee. Still thou triest every kind and persuasive art, and every monitory correction, to subdue his will, and regain his alienated heart; intent only upon his rescue from the danger, which he himself seeks in the madness of his heart, and in the error of his ways. We need nothing more to heighten the glory of thy grace, and nothing but our own insensibility to mark the depth of our own depravity. "To abhor ourselves as in dust and ashes," is the first lesson we are taught by these facts; to return to God with weeping and with supplication; and to be ashamed and confounded even "in the day when he is pacified toward us for all that we have done."

2. The subject affords an instructive test of our religious pretensions. What is religion? It is that by which almighty God, in his infinite goodness, magnifies man, morally magnifies man, and makes him truly great.

(1.) By the noble and elevating knowledge which it imparts. Is this the effect with us? Do we rest in the barren and ill-understood generalities of doctrine, looking into the perfect law of liberty, as a man beholding his natural face in a glass, and going away, and forgetting what manner of person he is; or do we "continue therein?" Do we "meditate on these things?" Are we led out by a hallowed curiosity to inquire "what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God;" and knowing it, do we often return to feed upon this truth in holy

musings? Are these the subjects to which our spirits fly with affectionate ardour from the little vanities of life? Do we catch their spirit? Do we take the impress of their sanctity?

(2.) True religion makes great by the relation it gives us to God,—the relation of "sons." Is this our character? Have we so "believed on his name," that we can claim this "power," right, privilege, "to become the sons of God?" And do we wear in our spirits this abiding testimony, that we are "the children of God?"

(3.) By the restoration of our nature to the Divine image. Are we thus magnified? Has the image of the earthly passed away, and given place to the new, the heavenly impress? Look into your hearts: are the characters of the new man there visible and distinct? Look into the course and tenor of your life: does the fulness of the renewed principle pour its sanctity and odour through your meek and healing speech, through your righteous and beneficent actions?

(4.) By the new and elevated ends for which it teaches us to live. How low are the objects and pursuits of worldly men! For, gild and adorn and hide them as they please: let them give to trifling the air of business, and to selfishness the aspect of public good, and regard to the social benefit of others; the whole may be resolved into the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" a selfish and temporary gratification and interest is the sole epitome. But the ends of living proposed in our religion, and which are seriously kept in view by every true Christian, are of a kind as ennobling as those of worldly men are debasing and destructive;—the approbation of God; regard to his will as our only rule in all things; living not for ourselves but for others; and the final acceptance of our persons, in "the day of his appearing." By these ends true religion magnifies man; but have they caught our eye, and do they fix our undeviating regards?

(5.) It magnifies him, by its singular principles of faith and love.—By its faith; which is not the mere assent of the judgment, but the trust of the heart. It is the evidence of unseen things; that which makes visible the invisible God, as Witness, Ruler, Judge, and Saviour, "near at hand, and not afar off;" so that we learn to walk with God, and to fear nothing but him, and to hope in nothing but in him. It is that which unveils too the invisible world, as well as the invisible God, and teaches man to try all present things by measures taken from eternity, and to refer all actions to their fruits and effects. By love; as singular a principle, and as peculiar to Christianity as faith: for it is not a philosophic approbation; it is not admiration of God merely, nor esteem for his perfect and holy character; but it is ardent attachment to him as the supreme Excellence; it is an infinite gratitude to him as to an infinite Benefactor; it is delight and joy in him as our Father; it is the principle which leads to intercourse and communion with God through the Holy Ghost, and which sensibly unites every soul, made vital by regenerating grace, with the vital influence of God. It is not necessary to stay to point out what is so obvious, that such principles must, wherever they vigorously exist, be the source of great and high thoughts, purposes, affections, powers, and enjoyments. But do these magnifying principles exist, and operate, and abide in you?

These are all points of serious and most important inquiry; for if the goodness of God is expressed in his gracious purpose to magnify

us by the instrumentality of religion, and we are unexalted and unrenewed, his kindness has hitherto been frustrated by our own obstinacy and resistance. Art thou, then, who now readest this declaration, "that God has magnified man, and set his heart upon him," in the midst of a religious system where all is magnificence of purpose, mean and groveling still? Is thy spirit dark amidst this splendour? dead, though often the voice of the Son of God has invited thee to live? in bondage, when thou mightest walk in liberty from sin? a slave, when thou art called to be a son? earthly in thine affections, when the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus are arranged and displayed to excite desire and effort? What "part or lot hast thou in this matter?" Boast not of the truth of the Gospel; for, the light by which thou walkest not, only discovers the more clearly that thou art "ignorant and out of the way;" a base worldling with a Christian name; a miserable self deceiver, taking words for things, and saying unto Christ, "Lord, Lord," without one operative principle of abiding faith, love, and obedience. Take away the veil of thy religious profession, and see and feel that thou art poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; and, withal, that thou hast been so besotted by the deceitfulness of the world, the flesh, and the devil, as to have said to this moment, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Yet if thou awakest fully to thy danger, despair not. Upon thee, even thee, false as well as sinful as thou hast been,—false to thyself, false to the Church, false to Christ,—God hath "set his heart." He remembereth that thou art man, an immortal man, one whose sins were laid upon Him who was "delivered for thy offences, and raised again for thy justification;" and he wills not that thou shouldest perish. His hand is upon thee for mercy, and not for judgment: suffer him to raise thee, to "set thee on high," to put thee among the princes of his people, to make thee great in his salvation. Hear his voice with thy inmost soul, calling thee to "glory, honour, and immortality;" "to-day" hear it, and "harden not thy heart."

3. We are taught by our subject to form a proper estimate of our fellow men, and of our obligations to promote their spiritual and eternal benefit.

Our text asks, "What is man?" And if the answer required were the actual moral condition of mankind, how sad a reply must be given! What are the majority of professing Christian men? They have a "form of godliness," but deny its power, or live in utter disregard of it. "This is their condemnation," their peculiar and aggravated condemnation, "that light is come into the world; but they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." What are Jewish men? "Blindness has happened unto Israel;" the veil is upon their hearts; they search the Scriptures, but their prejudices have taken away "the key of knowledge," and they find not Him of whom the law and the prophets are full. They are uncovenanted, "desolate, and forsaken." What are Mohammedan men, of whom many millions are found in the earth? Believers in an impostor, and imbruted by a religion which makes sensuality its noblest reward, and its heaven a brothel. What are the countless multitudes of pagan men? "A deceived heart hath turned them aside; they feed on ashes; nor is their understanding in them to deliver their soul, or to say, Is there not a lie in my right

hand?" They are "without God, without Christ, without hope," without morals, and, as far as human observation has gone, in the most thickly peopled parts of those wretched regions where "Satan has his seat," "there is none righteous, no, not one!" How fearful and heart-rending an answer is this to give to such a question!

But if, when we ask, "What is man?" the answer required should respect the capacity of man, under the influence of the grace of God, to rise from this state of wretchedness and pollution, it has been already given; and there is not one among these deluded millions, whether they dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, or surround us in our daily intercourse with society; whether they are dark by being plunged in surrounding darkness, or dark by a wilful exclusion of surrounding light; but may be brought to the knowledge and love of God our Saviour. The conscience which guilt darkens and disturbs may be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus; the heart which swells and rankles with every evil passion, may become all purity, tenderness, and love; and the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost. Those who have no hope may fly for refuge to the hope set before them; and they who wander in innumerable paths of destructive error, like sheep going astray, may return "to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls."

Here then, on one hand, is a being of infinite capacity and value, in an actual condition of depravity and danger; and, on the other, the possibility of his being raised into a holy and felicitous condition; and precisely as these two views of the case of man affect us, will be our conduct. If we rightly judge, and rightly feel, one of these views will excite our pity, the other will inspire a generous hope; and pity and hope, as they are both active and influential principles, must, if they are really excited, awaken us to the magnitude of the work of human salvation, and call forth in this great cause an unwearied effort. These considerations unfold the spring of the activity and devotion of the first ministers of Christ, and of the first Churches, who so readily co-operated with them. "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead!" They argued the danger of man from the means taken to save him; and they knew that the means had not failed of their effect, but that they who were "dead" might "live," because Christ had "died" for this very purpose. They explain the reason for which true Christians, in all ages, have been animated with restless desires and anxieties to benefit mankind, and why the philosophers of this world have been, and still are, so cold to human welfare. "What is man" in their systems, that he should awaken a care, or demand an effort or a sacrifice? He is a worm of the earth, an insect of larger growth; let him perish,—a moth is crushed, and the system goes on. But the sentiments in the text awaken other feelings. That God has "set his heart" on man, is the most powerful reason why we should set our hearts upon him; and because he hath so loved us, how forcibly must we feel it, that we ought to love one another! For "what is man" in the Christian system? Not a being to be neglected. All that respects him is awfully great; and renders him a prize worth the most arduous contest. He is the image of God in ruins; but still accountable for his actions. He must be judged; he may perish, and without help will perish; and what is perishing, when a deathless nature is the subject! These are the thoughts which unlock

the affections, and give to zeal its energy. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." And we know, too, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that he who was rich," for the sake of all the blind and infatuated sinful men about us, and in our world, "became poor, that they through his poverty might be made rich;" that he is "rich to all that call upon him," has no "respect of persons," and by us has commanded his truth to be dispersed, and his grace to be distributed. Let these views more deeply influence us, that we may never loiter in the work assigned to each of us, if we are truly recovered to God ourselves,—that of "strengthening our brethren." On them who are perishing for lack of knowledge, never can we too earnestly, and affectionately, and yearningly "set our hearts." If you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you "save a soul from death;" and can a more powerful motive be urged? You place another child in the family of God; you open a mind to knowledge ever enlarging, and to feelings which shall yield a felicity more noble and sanctifying throughout eternity. You advance the rapture of angels; for "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." You heighten the joy of your Lord himself; for "he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." Happy will it be when this true estimate of man shall be taken by the universal Church of Christ. Its torpor will be shaken off, its disputes and bickerings silenced, and every thought be absorbed, and every energy put forth, in the solemn work of saving souls from death. O thou who hast set thine heart upon man, inspire us with some larger portion of thine own boundless and tender charity!

4. Lastly, we see in our subject a reason for the exercise of a constant and cheerful trust in God.

After such demonstrations of his love to us, our limited expectations from his mercy, and our frequent doubts, may justly be reproved. He delighted to make us what we are, and he hasted to rescue us when sin had made the very greatness and glory of our nature our curse and bane; and having given us his Son, will he not "with him also freely give us all things?" Let us then firmly trust in the Lord. His eyes "run to and fro in the earth, that he may show himself strong in behalf of them that fear him." His ears are open to our prayers; and his promises of supply are ample as our wants. His proper work, as "the Captain of our salvation," is, to bring us as a part of his many sons to glory. If he had not been more concerned for us than we for ourselves, we had never known his quickening influence, nor his saving power; and "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." This is our hope and joy,—the life of Jesus. He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and because he lives, we shall live also. He has made it his very office to save us; he sets his heart upon us through every stage of our journey; and never so intensely as in the hour of danger and difficulty. Lift up then the hands which hang down, and confirm the feeble knees. The Divine dispensations of creation, providence, and grace unite to magnify us: and the glorious purpose shall not close at death; it shall go on till mortality is swallowed up of life, and shall be completed only when eternity has fulfilled its round, and man can receive, and infinite fulness can bestow, no more.

SERMON V.—*The Religious Instruction of the Slaves in the West India Colonies Advocated and Defended.*

Preached before the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, in the new Chapel, City-Road, London, April 28, 1824.

"Honour all men," 1 Peter ii, 17.

WE call Christianity, emphatically, a revelation. It is so. It is a revelation of God, of a Redeemer, and of a future life. But with scarcely less emphasis may it be entitled a revelation of man. At its first promulgation, it placed him under aspects new, at least, to the world of Gentiles; and, to this moment, it continues to stamp upon him this signature of his value in the sight of God, that all the truths which the revelations of the inspired Scriptures contain were made for his sake; that for him the veil has been withdrawn from the attributes of God; for him the Redeemer left "the bosom of the Father;" and for him the manifestations of immortality now bound the vanities of the present life with the stupendous realities of another.

Its discovery of the solemn and consolatory relations in which man stands to God is accompanied also by a most interesting declaration of the relation in which man stands to his fellows. When two passages were recorded in our Scriptures by the inspiration of their Author, views on this subject as novel as they were tender and benevolent were opened on the world. One affirms that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth;" that they are of one family, of one origin, of one common nature: the other, that our Saviour became incarnate, "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." Behold the foundation of the fraternity of our race, however coloured and however scattered. Essential distinctions of inferiority and superiority had been, in almost every part of the Gentile world, adopted as the palliation, or the justification, of the wrongs inflicted by man on man; but against this notion Christianity, from its first promulgation, has lifted up its voice. God hath made the varied tribes of men "of one blood." Dost thou wrong a human being? He is thy brother. Art thou his murderer by war, private malice, or a wearing and exhausting oppression? "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to God from the ground." Dost thou, because of some accidental circumstances of rank, opulence, and power on thy part, treat him with scorn and contempt? he is thy "brother for whom Christ died;" the incarnate Redeemer assumed his nature as well as thine; he came into the world to seek and to save him as well as thee; and it was in reference to him also that he went through the scenes of the garden and the cross. There is not, then, a man on earth who has not a Father in heaven, and to whom Christ is not an Advocate and Patron: nay, more, because of the assumption of our common humanity, to whom he is not a Brother.

Thus "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." But here brutal ignorance and affected philosophy agree to ask the question, "Who are men?" intimating, that, if the benevolent

principles just laid down are not to be disputed, the application of them must be narrowed; and that, as to various tribes which bear the human form, (several of the tribes, for instance, to which the charity of missionary societies is extended,) it is doubted whether they have this claim to brotherhood, because it is doubted whether they have any title to humanity. A civilized savage, armed with the power which an improved condition of society gives him, invades a distant country, and destroys or makes captive its inhabitants; and then, pointing to their contrary colour and different features, finds his justification in denying them to be men. A petty philosophy follows in the train, and confirms the hesitating deductions of ignorance. Its theory is, that the gradations of animated nature are gentle, and almost imperceptible; and, not content that the ape and baboon should fill up the chasm which exists between the quadruped and man, an intermediate link must be invented; and thus the coloured skin and the peculiar visage of the negro and the Hottentot are placed against their title to humanity, and millions, by the dreams of a theory, have been struck out of a family of God, the covenant of grace, and that fraternity which the Scriptures have extended to the whole race of Adam.

But our Scriptures have not left us to determine the title of any tribe to the full honours of humanity by accidental circumstances. To man has been given the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and to be capable of loving God, is the infallible criterion of our peculiar nature. So extensively has this principle been applied by missionary societies, that the philosophy in question is now refuted more by facts than reasoning. They have determined whether the races cast out and spurned by this theory are our brethren, and, as such, entitled to our fraternal yearnings; they have determined who are men, by determining who are capable of that universal and exclusive law to man,—the love of God. The negro, through all his shades; the Hottentot, through all his varieties; the Indians of America, and the natives of New-Holland, have all, in our own days, been inspired with the love of God through the Gospel; and again we see, that "in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but that Christ is all in all." Thus have missionary operations not only enlarged the sphere of benevolence, but extended the vision of a hoodwinked philosophy.

But what means the text, "Honour all men?" That it is to be taken in its most extensive range of application, is clear from what follows,—"Love the brotherhood." All men are to be honoured; but Christians, who form but a part of mankind, are to be loved with that special regard which is enjoined in the special command of Christ to his disciples, "Love one another." The whole race is first mentioned, then a part of the whole; and thus, whatever the precept may imply, it comprehends, in its obligation and in its object, men of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

What, then, is the "honour" which we are enjoined to pay to "all men?" Should we, with some, confine it to external courtesies and signs of respect; yet even this tends to impress us with some great peculiarity in man; for who treats an inferior animal with courtesy? Why, then, this distinction between the most degraded man and the most pampered brute, but that between them "a great gulf is fixed," and that

there is no approximation at all in the two natures? Thus, the very precept in the text, if interpreted to mean nothing more than external salutation and respect, rends asunder the fleshy veil in which all that is eminently man is enveloped, and exhibits to us, as the basis of the courtesies we are bound to render to "all men," without distinction, a being of superior capacity and delicate feeling; a nature which, in common with our own, has its sense of degradation and of honour; which sympathizes with us in our joys and sorrows, in the cheering influence of kindness, and the keen resentment of neglect and contempt. But this would be a very imperfect representation of the import of the text. To "honour," as the word signifies, is to estimate the value of any thing, and to proportion our regards to the ascertained value. Apply this rule to man. Estimate his value by his Creator's love, and by his Redeemer's sufferings; by his own capacity of religion, of morals, of intellectual advancement, of pleasure, of pain; by his relation to a life and to a death to come; and you will then feel, that to honour man is to respect him under these views and relations; to be anxious for his welfare; to contemplate him, not only with benevolence, but even with awe and fear, lest a prize so glorious should be lost, lest a being so capable should be wretched for ever.

These remarks have an intimate connection with the subject which I have been requested to bring before you in this discourse. It is not for me to range over the wide field of the labours of this society, and to lead you into the varied scenes of human error and diversified superstition on the one hand, or of missionary triumph on the other. It is assigned to me to fix your attention upon one branch only of the society's exertions,—the missions to the negroes of the West Indies; but, narrow as is the field, and uniform as is its aspect; though in many respects, this part of your work has become familiar to you, and wants that interest which novelty and incident give to other departments of exertion; I confess that I regret nothing in the task but my own insufficiency to plead its principles, to display its urgency, and to exhibit its success. But for that I should feel the greatest pleasure in offering you my feeble testimony in behalf of missions so signalized and encouraged by the blessing of God, and so worthy of your prayers, exertions, and liberalities.

With reference to your missions to the negroes of our West India colonies, I direct your attention,

I. To the objects of your Christian sympathy and care;

II. To their civil condition;

III. To the effects of past exertions;

IV. To circumstances which may encourage your zeal and perseverance.

I. To the objects of your sympathy and care;—they are African negroes.

1. In touching this subject, allow me one principle, and I desire no more, in behalf of this class of our fellow men. Allow me, that, if, among the various races of human kind, one is to be found which has been treated with greater harshness by the rest, from its possessing in a less degree the means of resistance; one whose history is drawn with a deeper pencilling of injury and wretchedness; that race, wherever found, is entitled to the largest share of the compassion of the

Christian Church, and especially of those Christian nations which, in a period of past darkness and crime, have had the greatest share in inflicting this injustice; and you concede to me the ground of a strong appeal in its favour. That appeal I make for the negro race, the most unfortunate of the family of man. Abundantly has it multiplied; but only to furnish victims to the fraud and avarice of other nations. From age to age its existence may be traced upon its own sunburnt continent; but ages, which have produced revolutions in favour of other countries, have left Africa still the common plunder of every invader who has had hardihood enough to obdurate his heart against humanity, to drag his lengthened lines of enchained captives through the desert, or to suffocate them in the holds of vessels destined to carry them away into hopeless, foreign, and interminable captivity. It has been calculated, that Africa has been annually robbed of one hundred and fifty thousand of her children. Multiply this number by the ages through which the injury has been protracted, and the amount appals and rends the heart. What an accumulation of misery and wrong! Which of the sands of her deserts has not been steeped in tears, wrung out by the pang of separation from kindred and country? What wind has passed over her plains without catching up the sighs of bleeding or broken hearts? And in what part of the world have not her children been wasted by labours, and degraded by oppressions?

2. To oppression has been added insult. They have been denied to be men, or deemed incorrigibly, because physically, embruted and immoral. The former I shall not stay to answer. Your missionaries have determined that; they have dived into that mine from which, we were often told, no valuable ore or precious stone could be extracted; and they have brought up the gem of an immortal spirit, flashing with the light of intellect, and glowing with the hues of Christian graces. But if it be somewhat too late to chase the negro out of the current of our common blood, and to sever his relation to Adam and to God; yet may you all see, in publications written, I say not within a century past, but within twelve months of the hour in which you meet to promote the intellectual and moral improvement of this injured race, that, at least, the negro is so degenerate a variety of the human species, as to defy all cultivation of mind, and all correction of morals.

Two descriptions of men come to this conclusion. The first is composed of those who have had to contend with the passions and vices of the negro in his purely pagan state, and have applied no other instrument to elicit the virtues they have demanded, than the stimulus of the whip, and the stern voice of authority. Who can wonder that they have failed? They have expected "to reap where they have not sown," and "to gather where they have not strewed;" they have required moral ends without the application of moral means; and their failure, therefore, leaves the question of the capacity of the negro untouched, and proves nothing but their own folly. In the second class are our minute philosophers, who take the gauge of intellectual capacity from the disposition of the bones of the head, and link morality with the contour of the countenance; men who measure mind by the rule and compasses; and estimate capacity for knowledge and salvation by a scale of inches, and the acuteness of angles.

And yet, will it be believed, that this contemned race can, as to in-

tellect and genius, exhibit a brighter ancestry than our own? that they are the offshoots—wild and untrained, it is true, but still the offshoots—of a stem which was once proudly luxuriant in the fruits of learning and taste; while that from which the Goths, their calumniators, have sprung, remained hard, and knotted, and barren? For is Africa without her heraldry of science and of fame? The only probable account which can be given of the negro tribes is, that, as Africa was peopled, through Egypt, by three of the descendants of Ham, they are the offspring of Cush, Misraim, and Put. They found Egypt a morass, and converted it into the most fertile country of the world; they reared its pyramids, invented its hieroglyphics, gave letters to Greece and Rome, and, through them, to us. The everlasting architecture of Africa still exists, the wonder of the world, though in ruins. Her mighty kingdoms have yet their record in history. She has poured forth her heroes on the field, given bishops to the Church, and martyrs to the fires; and, for negro physiognomy, as though that should shut out the light of intellect, go to your national museum; contemplate the features of the colossal head of Memnon, and the statues of the divinities on which the ancient Africans impressed their own forms, and there see, in close resemblance to the negro feature, the mould of those countenances which once beheld, as the creations of their own immortal genius, the noblest and most stupendous monuments of human skill, and taste, and grandeur. In the imperishable porphyry and granite is the unfounded and pitiful slander publicly, and before all the world, refuted. There we see the negro under cultivation. If he now presents a different aspect, cultivation is wanting. That solves the whole case, for, even now, when education has been expended upon the pure and undoubted negro, it has never been bestowed in vain. Modern times have witnessed, in the persons of African negroes, generals, physicians, philosophers, linguists, poets, mathematicians, and merchants, all eminent in their attainments, energetic in enterprise, and honourable in character; and even the mission schools in the West Indies exhibit a quickness of intellect, and a thirst for learning, to which the schools of this country do not always afford a parallel.

3. But the negro has been doomed to another degradation. It was not enough that he should be stultified in intellect, and brutalized beyond correction in morals; he has been represented as under a Divine anathema, a part of an accursed and devoted race; and thus he has not only been denied the honours of a human intellect, but excluded even from the compassions of God.

To this race has been applied the prophetic malediction of Noah, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren," the descendants of Shem and Japheth; and because they have been supposed to be under the ban of the Almighty, it has been concluded, that every kind of injury might, with impunity, be inflicted upon them by his creatures. Nothing is more repulsive than to see men resorting to the word of God for an excuse or a palliative for the injuries which they are incited to inflict on others by their own pride and avarice; going up profanely to the very judgment seat of an equal God, to plead his sanction for their injustice; establishing an alliance between their own passions and his perfections; and attempting to convert the fountain of his mercy into "the waters of bitterness." But the case they

adduce will not serve them. The malediction of Noah (if we even allow it to be one, and not a simple prediction) fell not upon the negro races; it fell chiefly on Asia, and only to a very limited extent upon Africa; it fell, as the terms of the prophecy explicitly declare, upon Canaan; that is, in Scripture style, upon his descendants, the Canaanites, who were destroyed, or made subjects by the Israelites; and perhaps upon the Carthaginians, who were subverted by the Romans.—Here was its rage and its limit; the curse never expanded so as to encompass a single negro tribe; and, Africa, with all thy just complaints against the practice of Christian states, thou hast none against the doctrines of the Christian's Bible! That is not a book, as some have interpreted it, written, as to thee, "within and without," in "lamentation, and mourning, and wo;" it registers against thee no curse; but, on the contrary, exhibits to thee its fulness of blessings; establishes thy right to its covenant of mercy, in common with all mankind; and crowds into the joyous prospect which it opens into the future, the spectacle of all thy various tribes "stretching out their hands unto God," acknowledging him, and receiving his blessing!

But, if the prediction of Noah were an anathema, and if that malediction were directed against the negro races; yet, let it be remarked, it belongs not to the Gospel age. Here the anathemas of former dispensations are arrested and repealed; for no nation can remain accursed under the full establishment of the dominion of Christ, since "all the families of the earth" are to be "blessed in him." The deleterious stream which withers the verdure of its banks, and spreads sterility through the soils it touches in its course, is at length absorbed and purified in the ocean, ascends from thence in cooling vapours, and comes down upon the earth in fruitful showers. Thus Christianity turns all curses into benedictions. Its office is to bless, and to bless all nations; it is light after darkness, and quiet after agitation. The restoring and the healing character is that in which all the prophets array our Saviour; and, if partiality is ascribed to him at all, it is partiality in favour of the most despised, and friendless, and wretched of our kind. The scythe has gone before, and, in all ages, has swept down the fairest vegetation, and left it to wither, or to be trodden under foot; but "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, like the showers that water the earth;" "all nations shall be blessed in him," and "all people," in grateful return, "shall call him blessed."—Well may we exclaim, with the psalmist, who recorded these grateful revelations, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who only doeth" these "wondrous things, and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory."

From these observations on the negro race, I call your attention,

II. To the civil condition of that portion of them which, in our West India colonies, claim our Christian care. They are in a state of bondage; and in number amount to about eight hundred thousand souls.

I approach the subject of West India slavery, not, as some might suppose, with fearful steps; for I know that no danger can arise from the sound and explicit views which you entertain on this subject. I know the objects which you propose, and the clear and Christian course which your missionaries abroad have undeviatingly pursued for now near forty years; during which they have been pursuing their important

and benevolent labours in those colonies. I advert to it only as it is connected with missions; and under this relation the system of our colonial bondage may be regarded in four views.

1. In the first place, it has illustrated the patient and submissive character of the negroes; and, on this account, has entitled them to our good will, and given them a claim upon our exertions for their improvement and welfare.

Let us do the negro justice. He has been our servant, and he has not been a troublesome and unruly one. There is something affecting in that simplicity of the African which, on his native continent, has invited rather than resisted aggression. With a spirit more buoyant, suspicious, and resentful, the negro tribes would not have been for ages an easy prey to every plunderer and hunter of men. Their shores would have bristled with spears, and their arrows have darkened the heavens; nor would the experiment of man stealing have been twice repeated. The same simplicity and tameness of character distinguishes the negroes in their state of bondage. It has not required a violent hand to keep them down; their story is not that of surly submission, interrupted by frequent and convulsive efforts to break their chain; and the history of slavery no where, and in no age, presents an example of so much quiet, under the same or similar circumstances, where the bondage has been so absolute, and the proportion of the dominant part of society has been so small, or so insulated from the body of the empire. But what do we infer from this? Does it impress us with no respect for this patient race of enslaved men? Does it not lay us under additional obligations to seek their benefit? Answers it not a thousand ridiculous fears, as to the effect of imparting to them the light of Christian instruction? If the Gospel taught compassion and mercy to the Scythian of ancient times, and the Goth of the middle ages; and if it is now stealing with an emollient influence over the fierce barbarism of the American Indian and the New Zealander; shall the news of your sympathy, the voice of your missionaries publishing peace, and the implanted meekness of your Gospel, rouse the pacific negro into headlong revenge and fury, and spread bloodshed and violence over the fields he has tilled, and through the habitations of his employers? If we apply a power so calming to the boisterous sea, will it lash into wild commotion the lake slumbering within its hills? Were the negroes of an opposite character; were the experiment to be made on men of harder nerve and sterner mould, you would make it without fear; but when the negro race is in question, you may well smile at all these predictions of mischief and misery. You have replied to all these alarms by the facts which your missions have exhibited.—For near forty years you have had negro societies and congregations in the West Indies; and not an instance has occurred in which one of them has been found in rebellion, or detected in conspiracy. You found docility, and you implanted principle; you found patience, and you exalted it even into charity.

2. This condition of servitude has rendered our neglect, in not instructing the negro population of the colonies in the principles of religion, the more criminal, because it has taken away the ground of every excuse which may be made for the omission of so obvious a duty.

As a nation, we are guilty of permitting so large a portion of our

fellow subjects, of our very servants, to remain under the darkening and corrupting influence of paganism; nor can it be said, that we have not been, till recently, reminded of our duty, or not strongly urged to it. A public call was made upon the nation, near one hundred and fifty years ago, in a very able and powerful work, published by the Rev. Morgan Godwyn, a clergyman of Barbadoes, and entitled, "The Negro's and Indian's Advocate, suing for their admission into the Church."* This book, printed in London in the year 1680, and dedicated to the then archbishop of Canterbury, contains an earnest and argumentative appeal to Christian principles and to good policy on this important subject; but the call was made in vain, and the great mass of the negro population were suffered, to the shame of Christianity and Protestantism, to remain unpitied as to their best interests, and still excluded from the salvation of the Gospel.

I have said, "to the shame of Christianity and Protestantism;" for in our hands, and with respect to the negro slaves, both have been tarnished; and, if we have a due sense of the honour in which we ought to maintain both, even that may become a powerful motive to stimulate us to future efforts commensurate with the case, and to remove a reproach which time has only accumulated. For it is impossible to turn to those colonies without blushing for the profession we have made of a religion of zeal and charity. At different times, and in different places, paganism and Christianity have been seen in contact with each other; but under circumstances which cheer the spirit, and elevate our confidence in the benevolent energy of our religion. The first ages of the Church present scenes of this kind. Christianity was constantly extending itself into the darkness around it; wherever it was introduced, it commenced its assaults on paganism; and, though spurned and persecuted, though frowned upon by power, and resisted by mobs and magistrates, it turned not away from the contest, until it had hurled down one of the proudest forms of established paganism, and, in the triumph of exulting charity, waved its banner over the mighty ruin.—Through ages of relentless persecution, it remained true to its own uncompromising and aggressive principle, till "out of weakness, it was made strong," and by patient faith, and the omnipotence of love, it had put to flight "the armies of the alien." At a lower period we see the activity of the same principles and affections, though under other circumstances. The paganism of barbarous nations had launched itself into Christian lands, and wielded there the supreme dominion; but the spirit of Christianity, though decayed, was not extinct; zeal for the conversion of men had not become an empty name; it seized upon the conquering Goth, and, struggling with a ruder form of superstition than that which pagan Rome had presented, at length subdued it to itself. The irruption of these nations from the north was like a snow storm from the same rude quarter, driven wide and distant upon fields warmed by milder skies, and still reverberating the heat of but recently-obscured suns; and, wide as the drift was spread, it no sooner touched the soil,

* The title in full is, "The Negro's and Indian's Advocate, suing for their admission into the Church; or, a Persuasive to the Instructing and Baptizing of the Negroes and Indians in our Plantations; showing, that, as the compliance therewith can prejudice no man's just interest, so the wilful neglecting and opposing of it is no less than a manifest apostasy from the Christian Faith."

than it began to yield to its influence; and the rugged wintry waste was speedily changed into a scene of refreshed verdure and renovated beauty.

If we turn to our Asiatic empire, paganism and Christianity are there also in contact; but the scene is instructive and cheering. There the power is Christian; but it resorts not to carnal weapons for the propagation of the faith; the idolater is not coerced, and toleration of the evils which paganism inflicts upon society is carried, at least, to its extreme limits. But Christianity is not inactive. Under its patronage the manly science of Christian nations dawns upon the intellect of millions; the Scriptures pour their streams of sacred truth through the varied dialects of an immense population; and the labours of the Christian missionary find a full protection and a cheering patronage in all the gradations of authority.

But when we look at Christianity, as planted in the midst of the paganism of the West Indies, again I say, we may blush for its dishonoured name and its withered honours,—honours never so tarnished in any hands as our own, and those of a few other Protestant colonial powers. Look at Christianity, and look at paganism, as they co-exist in the West Indies: are they (with a few exceptions, modern in date and limited in extent) in conflict? Has paganism any fears of attack? Has Christianity any ardour of conquest? Age after age passed away, and they still reposed together in dull and slumbering harmony. The form of Christianity was there; but it was destitute of life; the heart was without feeling, and the hand without activity. The pagan felt that he had no share in the care and compassion of the Christian; and the Christian resigned the pagan to his ignorance and spiritual dangers: as a matter of course, he was to remain untaught, unpitied, and unsaved. There was Christianity, with her whole apparatus of instruction and salvation, and hope and joy, but not for the negro; her temples rose, but to him they were not the house of prayer; the holy fount of baptism was there, but not that he might "wash away his sins, calling upon the name of the Lord;" the broken sacramental bread was there, but not that he might eat and live for ever; the ministers of Christ were there, but the negroes were considered "no part of their charge," nor, from their limited number, could they be to any great extent. What excuse, then, is there, what palliation, for ages of criminal neglect by the nation at large? for this chill and heartless Christianity? If any be set up, that "the negro of our colonies is a slave" is the answer to it. He was wholly in our power; no obstacles to the kind and persevering application of the means and ordinances of instruction existed, nor could exist, in such a state of society. What, as a national act, is now proposed to be done for the extension of Christian instruction, might have been done a century and a half ago; the accumulation of pagan ignorance which now exists might have been prevented; and African ignorance and superstition been wholly banished from the colonies. That pious individuals and missionary societies have waked, while others slept, is their praise; that you have taken so large a share, in late years, in this long unthought-of duty, is to your honour; but the debt we still, as a country, owe to the very credit of our religion, and the deep arrears of obligation and Christian kindness to the untaught slaves which are yet undischarged, you will, I trust, feel to be com-

manding motives to a quickened zeal, and to undiscouraged perseverance.

3. The third consideration is, that, limited as the application of the means of Christian instruction by missions to the negroes has been they have triumphed over all the obstacles presented to moral improvement by a state of bondage, and have afforded, by that circumstance, the most obvious evidence of their beneficial tendency.

To my mind, there is nothing in the history of the Church which so strikingly exhibits the power of our religion as its triumphs over the moral evils so uniformly and necessarily inherent in a system of slavery. That is a state in which no class of society, the dominant or the subject, is not vitiated,—vitiated in temper, in principle, in conduct. All history is in proof of this; and, if that failed, language, as to the enslaved class, at least, would supply the testimony. We call that man a villain who unites baseness and treachery with his crimes, and complicates vice with deceit and cunning; but the villain was our ancient slave; and villany, in its original acceptation, is slavery. We find the same association in other languages, ancient and modern; all stamping it as the fact of experience, that slavery is essentially demoralizing, and that it compounds into the character all the faithlessness and feculence of moral turpitude. There is a class of mere human virtues, which may exist independently of the direct influence of religion and principled morality. Such are honour, honesty, generosity, patriotism, and others, which, though but conventional, and the shadows and images of real virtue, are corrective in their influence upon society, and give it a higher tone and a purer character; but even these cannot, except by very accidental circumstances, vegetate in this soil, nor flourish in the fog and impurities of this stifling atmosphere; they require a purer air, the brisk wafting of the nobler passions, the excitement of hope, the warmth of charity, and the mountain breeze of freedom.

Yet, what is impossible to man is possible to God. Where virtues of human offshoot and of earthly seed cannot strike, there the Spirit of God, by his word, can mould the soul of man into a productive soil, and make the desert of a slave's heart rich with the verdure of, at least, the passive and the humbler graces. Christianity effected this among the slaves of the ancient world. It gave cheerfulness to submission, and patience to wrong; it created charity, where gratitude could have no place; shut the lip of reproach, and silenced murmuring; taught "servants" (slaves) to serve not with "eye service," but on the nobler principle of "doing it to the Lord." And yet I do not think that the power of Christianity was exhibited among those ancient slaves in aspect so marked and impressive as in producing the same effects among those of our own colonies. The character of that ancient bondage was different. In some respects, indeed, it was more cruel; but in none so galling to the feelings. The ancient slave was not cut off so absolutely from intellectual improvement; he was not so insulated from the bustle and stirring movements of a great empire; he was not so put out of the range of the domestic charities; above all, he differed not usually in country and in colour from his masters, or that colour was not to him the badge of physical shame and degradation. The abomination of caste, founded on the hue of the skin, did not exist as

in modern negro slavery, with its associations of disgust, on the one hand, and of deep mortification, humbled feeling, and often deep resentment, on the other. But religion in our own colonies has triumphed even over these. Its light has penetrated, so to speak, the solid darkness of minds left without instruction; it has struck the spark of feeling into hearts unaccustomed to salutary emotions; it has reconciled man to the degradation of colour and feature; it has produced charity toward those who have dealt out to them the most humbling kinds of insult; breathed over passions which, when once awakened, are terrible, the calm of resignation; and taught the spirit, spurned from every other resting place, to rest in God, and to wait for his salvation. If these have been the triumphs of religion in modern slavery; if all this was achieved at a time when the condition of our slave population did not assume that hopeful and improving character which, thank God, it does at present; you can despair of nothing. The field of exertion is before you; its most rigid clods have been broken up and prepared; and it only remains for you to sow, with a hand more liberal, the seeds of truth, and peace, and righteousness, to reap, year after year, a full-eared and unfailing harvest.

4. My last view of West India slavery, as connected with missionary exertions, is, that the character and manner of its termination altogether depend upon the infusion of Christian principles into the minds of the slave population.

In the present circumstances of the world, nothing human can be more certain than that slavery must terminate throughout the British empire. No thinking and observant man, who looks abroad upon society, and notices the current of opinion, both as to its strength and direction, can doubt of this; at least, I have met with no one who doubts it; and if the probability of the case be so strong, nothing can be less wise than to refuse to look forward to this approaching and, whenever it arrives, this important result.

In one of two ways only will that state of society be terminated in the West Indies,—by the operation of bad principles and passions, or by the salutary and controlling influence of Christianity, co-operating with lenient government. Let each, for a moment, be considered, that you may discern more fully your clear path of benevolent duty.

Slavery may be terminated by principles bad in themselves, or bad as they are connected with inconsiderate and violent passions. Is this improbable? When it is remembered, that the West India slaves neighbour upon states which are breaking off their connection with European powers, and emancipating their brethren; that a large island presents to them a picture of a sanguinary and guilty, but successful, revolt; that in this country principles destructive of order, and loyalty, and civil duty, are continually issuing from the press,—a press which by various means, reaches them; that even just principles of freedom and right are, and always will and ought to be, debated at home with warmth and boldness; we have, on the one hand, a view of the excitement which is operating upon society in these colonies, and that with constantly increasing energy. On the other, let us suppose this excitement to go on without the communication of religious principles, and the introduction of measures of civil amelioration to regulate, control, or neutralize it, and that all such attempts, upon a large scale, are

resisted and discouraged; then an elastic fluid of tremendous power is condensed by every stroke; and a surly application of that resistance to the evil which mere power, without the aid of moral means, can supply, will only delay the explosion, to render it more expansive and fatal. This is one method by which slavery may be extinguished,—one which we all deprecate, and which every good man will exert himself, with his whole might, to prevent.

The other is the gradual termination of this now increasingly anxious state of servitude, by the influence of Christianity, preparing the slaves for those measures of wise and benevolent policy which the local and the supreme government may adopt for their benefit, and co-operating also with them, in all their stages, to render them efficient. This is not an end which we formally propose, as the friends and supporters of missions. Our object is immediate,—to do good by bringing men under the practical and saving influence of religion. We form no ulterior plans; we follow the direct course of instant duty to make men Christians, whether Indian or negro, bond or free. But it would be a folly, on proper occasions and in proper places, not to admit, that the Christianity which is so active in our world in the present day is working onward to civil ends and to definite improvements in the outward condition of men wherever it prevails; and, consequently, in the West Indies. Indeed, it has several times been observed, in official papers published by the colonial legislatures, and in the course of the controversy which has been recently carried on on these subjects, that Christianity must destroy modern bondage, as it destroyed the slavery existing in ancient Europe; and as to this silent and peaceful operation of its principles, some have judiciously refrained from expressing any alarm, and have professed to regard the result even with complacency. The view they have thus taken of the influence of our Divine religion upon society is founded in truth; for though, in states very partially Christianized, slavery may continue, as one of many evils not yet fully reached by the remedy; yet, when the mass of a community is leavened with its influence, the subjection of man to man, as a slave, must cease. The reason of this is, that our religion, on the principle of its own two great social laws,—to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to do to others as we would have them do to us,—makes it an imperative duty to render every man's condition as felicitous as the present mixed state of things, where the rich and the poor must still exist, and toil and suffering cannot be excluded, will allow. But the discipline which Heaven has imposed on sinful men, rigid as it is in many respects, is compatible with the abolition of slavery. This is not, as experience in our own and other countries has proved, one of those necessary evils which must remain, after all the triumphs of religion; and, therefore, Christianity must abolish slavery throughout the world, in the accomplishment of its own plans of benevolence and renovation. It is a blot which cannot remain amidst the glories of Messiah's reign. It is solely a punitive evil, not a corrective one, and is therefore inconsistent with the dominion of mercy; it implies, in its most mitigated form, an injustice, and is therefore contrary to the full dominion of righteousness. These are the principles on which we assuredly conclude that Christianity, largely and efficiently diffused, cannot consist with this state of society. If our neighbour is to be

loved as ourselves, he cannot be left in a condition which no man on earth, however miserable, would choose,—the condition of a slave. If, as in the text, all men are to be honoured, no part of them can be left in the degradation of being the very property, the goods and chattels, of others; in a state in which they are things, not men. But, strong as are these principles of our religion,—and I am not disposed to keep them out of sight, or to disallow, for one moment, the force of the objection often made to the Christian instruction of the slaves, that it must diffuse principles and feelings inconsistent with this kind of servitude,—yet is there nothing alarming in this view of the tendency of the Gospel. It connects itself with no violent revolutions, no ensanguined instruments, no violations of order, no storms of passion, no sweeps of vengeance. It is the Gospel of peace. It teaches men to sustain injury with patience, until they are relieved by legal means; and to trust rather in that disposing of men's hearts which belongs to God, than in an arm of flesh. It does not influence one class of society only; but it advances, wherever it is in progress, with a growing potency upon all. It is, like the stealing light of morning, soft, penetrating, and expansive; society rises together; the governed and the governors are enlightened and ameliorated; power becomes protective, and laws righteous, equal, and merciful; the standard both of right and of humanity is raised; feelings of friendliness connect the extremes of society in a common bond of good will; a regard to circumstances dictates and regulates improvement; and, in the case of slavery, the door of freedom is set open, not forced by violence; and he who, under such prudent regulations as a paternal governing power may think it right for the safety and interests of all parties to adopt, "may be free," as the Apostle Paul observes, "chooses it rather." These are ends which, as I have just said, you do not formally propose; these are objects which are to occupy other cares than yours, the cares of men in situations of authority and influence, and of the country at large, in the exercise of its public and civil duties; but it stamps a value upon your exertions, and may operate as no mean motive to your activity in them, that, by moralizing and evangelizing a large portion of your fellow subjects, you are preparing them to the hand of a wise philanthropy, and the benevolence of the parent and colonial governments, that they may be invested with civil rights, and the privileges of a Christian people.

III. Hitherto our observations have been general, or rather, your attention has been directed chiefly to that vast and wild desert which is presented by, at least, seven hundred thousand human beings in our West India colonies, upon which the light of the Gospel, as yet, has never shone, and in which no seed of truth and righteousness has been planted; but I now turn to the effects produced wherever Christian care has extended Christian cultivation. There are, thank God, fertile spots in this extensive waste; and wherever they meet the eye and cheer the heart, they are the creations of the Gospel. What, then, have been the effects, I say not upon thousands, but upon tens of thousands, of this class of degraded men?

Let us try the question,

1. By the communication of Christian knowledge.

I grant, that the elements of Christianity only have been generally

imparted, and that the opportunities of many of the slaves to attend instruction have been, in comparison of our own, few, and often interrupted. I grant, also, that we shall not find among them the doctrinal disputant and the subtle casuist, or the power of mastering many of the difficulties of Scripture; but have we considered what the communication of the elements of Christianity to a pagan mind imports, and that it is in its elements and first principles that its saving power consists? In the case of an African slave, it has not, I allow, to displace those multiplied perversions of truth which an erring but more cultivated reason creates, nor to dissipate those illusions of a corrupt but highly-wrought imagination with which Asiatic superstition fills and bewilders the soul of man. Take it only that his mind is little more than a mere blank, as to religious truth, yet how powerfully does that appeal to our hearts! It is a blank which excludes all recognition of God, and all knowledge of his intercourse with men; which shuts out the history of our Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice; which admits no moral distinctions; which catches no light from the immortality which rises before us in the Gospel, in forms so impressive and influential. O sad condition of man, when his case is considered thus negatively only! But, in the minds of thousands of these slaves, this broad and utter blank has, by missionary care, been filled up with that "excellent knowledge of Christ" which brings with it all those spirit-stirring, controlling, and cheering truths to which I have just adverted. At least ten thousand of their children in our mission schools, and under the instruction of missionaries, catch, with the first opening of their understandings, the rays which break from this vast scene of religious intelligence; while numerous societies and congregations of adults throughout the islands listen to them from the pulpit, meditate on them at their labours, talk of them in the hut, sing them in hymns, and, in admonitory advices, commend them to their children. The light has not fully dissipated the darkness; but that day has broken which never more shall close.

2. By the production of morality.

The want of principle, the absence of moral and even of decent manners, and the practice of crime among the negroes, have been the constant topics of complaint among men connected with this species of property; and the facts as to the pagan slaves are not to be questioned. These are the effects, the necessary effects, of paganism; and indeed we have heard of late, in the heated discussions which have occurred, that nothing better could be hoped even from Christianity; that to teach them religion would produce precisely the same effects as the heathenism of their uninstructed state; that the result would be to relax the nerve of industry, to kindle the angry and to nurture the vengeful passions, to break the bond of obedience, and to spread devastation throughout the colonies. "Can the same fountain, then, send forth streams sweet and bitter?" Or can you trace the same effects to opposite and contrary causes? Are Christian light and pagan darkness equally the sources of vice and danger? If so, we must lay our censures equally upon each; and if we hesitate to do this, then are we compelled to choose against which of the two we will direct our cautionary expressions of alarm as the cause of evil. To such persons we may say, "'Choose you whom you will serve: if the Lord be God,

follow him; if Baal, follow him.' If you attack Christianity as the mischievous agent of immorality, then be Christians in name no longer, and go over to the purer and more peaceful paganism of the slaves you rule; but if you refuse, then propitiate an injured Christianity, and acknowledge that you have been ignorant of its nature, and that you have mistaken all its tendencies." That is the only alternative for such persons, whose judgment, not whose settled principles, we may charitably hope to be in fault; but for you whom I now address, the confidence which you have in the beneficial influence of religious instruction upon the negro population of the colonies has a full justification in open and acknowledged facts, and a long and extensive experience. What has so generally raised the religious slaves into confidence, and offices of trust, but their improved character? What has rendered them more healthy,—another fact,—but their temperance? What has given the instructed slave a richer *peculium* than his fellow,—another acknowledged fact,—but his quickened industry? What has enabled the committee of this society to say, that, for forty years, no slave in your societies has been either a conspirator, a rebel, or insubordinate, but the influence of the precepts of obedience enjoined by the Gospel which he has been taught? What has created so many excellent friends of missions among the planters of the colonies generally, and most in number where your missions have been longest established, and are, consequently, best known, but the obvious moral improvement of their people? What are the answers we have been enabled to give to the calumnies with which we have been assailed? Not hypothetic reasonings from abstract principles; not idle declamations; not promises for the future to atone for the failures of the past; but facts detailed in the annual reports of the society, confirmed by the frequent and ample testimony, not of missionaries only, but of persons of the greatest observation and influence in the colonies, of the salutary and important effects of religious care upon the temper, the happiness, and the conduct of the slaves.

3. By the introduction and establishment of Christian worship among this heathen and long-neglected people.

It may be truly said of the uninstructed slaves of our colonies, that they have no religion; that whatever mythology they had originally in Africa, the Creole slaves, now the larger portion of the slave population, know and practise, beyond certain superstitions which have no connection or meaning, none of the forms of paganism, and have, therefore, no worship of any kind. I know not how this consideration may affect you; but on me it seems to make an impression more sad, and to convey the idea of a desertion more complete, than if imaginary powers called forth their hope and their fear, and than if the more innocent forms of even a delusive devotion occupied their attention, and gave exercise to their intellect. For how dull and inert an object is a human mind, when its powers lie unawakened by either a false or a true devotion! How fades from the sight the lofty distinction between man and the inferior animals, that the former is capable of converse with invisible powers! Yet this is the case of many hundred thousands of uninstructed negroes. Other pagans, even though they greatly err, acquire ideas of greater or less sublimity, and affections of some degree of force. Nature is not viewed by them with stupid, senseless, inob-

servant gaze. But to the negro of the colonies the heavens above are vacant, both of the true God, and of unreal divinities. To him no spirit whispers in the woods, no patron power presides over the fountain; his blessings are connected with no invisible superior Benevolence, he has no trust in imaginary guardians; no refuge from trouble, delusive as it is, in the creations of his fancy, or the legendary deities of his ancestors. I know, indeed, that, as to moral good, and the hopes of a better life, nothing substantial and saving can emanate from false religion; but I am not sure, this life only being considered, whether the negro would not be a gainer in intellect and quickened feeling by the introduction of some of the milder forms of paganism itself; and, if so, we reach the deepest conception of his religious destitution. What then shall we say, if, to a considerable part of this deserted and neglected race, the labours of Christian missionaries have opened the glory, the sanctity, and the comforts of even Christian worship? This they have done; and nothing makes a stronger appeal in behalf of such labours to the heart of a benevolent and pious man, than the results of this kind with which they have been followed. The true God has been revealed to their minds in the splendour of his own revelations; the heavens have been taught to declare to them his glory, and the firmament to show forth his handy work; they know him now as their "Father in heaven," and have learned that his watchful providence extends to them. Rising suns, and smiling fields, and rolling thunders, and sweeping hurricanes all speak of him to negro hearts; and negro voices mingle with our own in giving to him the praises due "unto his name." The history of the incarnate God and the scenes of Calvary have been unfolded to their gaze; they hear "the word of reconciliation," are invited to a "throne of grace," and there "find mercy, and grace to help in time of need." They have the Sabbath with its sanctities; and houses of prayer, raised by the liberality of their friends, receive their willing, pressing crowds. One to another they now say, "Come, and let us go up to the house of the Lord;" and tens of thousands of them now, in every religious service, join us in those everlasting anthems of the universal Church, "We praise thee, O God! we ackowledge thee to be the Lord!" "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!"

4. By the effect produced by Christianity upon their domestic habits.

It conveys a volume in a single phrase, as to the moral condition of the slaves, to say, that, before they were brought under the care of missionaries, marriage was almost entirely unknown; and that it remains so wherever religious influence has not been applied. In consequence, the purer affections could have no place in their hearts; parental yearnings had little tenderness; filial regards no foundation in esteem; and a degrading and destructive immorality swept down decency, order, health, and happiness. Jealousies, brawls, and fightings were the product of every day; the hut was the scene of revel or of strife; and the toil of the field only suspended the discord or interrupted the revel to give new energy to the exasperated tongue, and vagrancy to the midnight prowl.

It is among the noblest triumphs of missionary patience, that these vices have been subdued in so many thousands. Without the sanction

of civil law, a sanction which to this hour does not exist; but the simple force of religious instruction, by the habit of submission to the commands of Heaven which has been formed, by the creation of conscience and the fear of God, all the sanctities and moral and civil benefits of marriage have been introduced. About twenty thousand negroes, in the Wesleyan societies alone, are now living in this "holy state of matrimony;" and, within about four years, four thousand marriages have been performed by their missionaries. Many of these have become the heads of families; distinguished from the rest of their fellows by the existence of a superior relation between them and their children; by the strength which virtue gives to affection; by that care for each other which that affection and that relation only can supply; by more of respect abroad, and by peace at home. These are the result of your benevolent exertions; and you may reflect upon them with unmingled joy: the Zacharias and Elizabeths of the plantations and the town "walking in the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless;"—children who share the care of both their parents, the effect alone of regular marriages; children whose morals are guarded by parental example; who feel themselves raised by their very legitimacy above the spurious breed around them; many thousands of whom follow the steps of their parents to the house of prayer, are taught in the mission schools, and who convey to the hearts of negro parents a thrill which never, in former times, spread its delightful sensation through one of their race, when, at the public examinations of the schools, catechisms and large portions of the Scriptures are repeated, and hymns of praise are poured forth, in thrilling accents, from their infant voices. These instances of care for the negro youth, on the one hand, and of their improvement on the other, are not now, thank God, as formerly, exhibited on a scale too small to attract public notice, though then, perhaps, they had even the greater merit; but these are labours which, however opposed in some colonies, have the kindest patronage in many others. Planters, magistrates, governors, and presidents have often, of late, taken a part in these examinations of the negro schools, mingled in the delight of those new scenes, and distributed commendation and rewards for proficiency in the Scriptures, and for orderly and devout behaviour in the house of God.

5. By the effects produced by their religion in trouble, sickness, and death.

I say nothing of wrongs; but, in the ordinary calamities of life, what is the refuge of pagan negroes? They have none; they are "without God," and "without hope!" Grief rises into rage, or subsides into despair, till a new and sharper pang rouses the heart, and agony again relieves itself by expression. But in this the beneficial influence of Christianity is strikingly displayed, that it has taught those who knew no refuge, no hope in trouble, "to possess their souls in patience," by teaching them that God "careth for them;" and to disburden an oppressed and sinking heart, by casting their care on him, and resorting to his throne of mercy in their simple prayers for succour.

Where religion is not, superstition still retains its place; and it is generally of a gloomy, often of a destructive character. Such is the superstition of the African slave. He believes in Obeah, and often fancies himself under the power of the professors of that art of de-

struction. His spirits sink; his appetite forsakes him; he shuns society; the power of his imagination produces an overwhelming dread of approaching calamity and death; and, after lingering a short time, he dies the victim of his fears. So common has this evil been, as to call for the severest laws against the practice of Obeah; and law has done something to check the evil, but religious influence more. So well is this known, that, when no other motive has, with some owners and managers, existed to call in the aid of missionary exertions, they have been sought as the remedy for this fatal superstition; and where instruction has most prevailed, Obeahism has, for the most part, disappeared. The doctrine of providence has banished it; that has erected the prostrate spirit of the negro, taught even his feeble mind to despise these occult powers, and saved his life by implanting within him a sure trust and confidence in God.

Sickness is the lot of all; and the negro is subject to some peculiarly tedious and afflictive forms of disease. Paganism is always selfish and unfeeling. This is its character among negroes. The slaves are taken care of by their owners in sickness, as a matter of course; but they are usually deserted by their fellows. The nominal husband leaves his wife in hopeless affliction, and seeks another; the wife, in like manner, abandons her husband, and forms a new connection; and thus the sick and the dying are forsaken by all, except those whose attendance is compelled. The scene is changed wherever Christianity has extended its influence. The sick have heard the voice, "Is any afflicted? let him pray;" and his relatives remain with him, to minister to his wants, and to share and soothe his anguish.

The negro funerals are a disgusting scene; they are accompanied with ridiculous gestures, noisy drumming and shouts, with drinking and feasting; yet, now and then may be discerned a spirit pierced too deeply to join the deafening riot,—hearts which have felt the full pang of separation. The dead are not always forgotten by the pagan negroes; they resort annually to their graves, and offer food and liquor to their departed relatives. A negro mother in Jamaica was known, for thirteen years, to make this annual visit to the grave of her daughter, and, in an agony of feeling, to offer her oblation. Thus "they sorrow without hope!" We respect the strength of the affection; we lament its downward earthly tendency: all the thoughts of that poor mother were in the grave with her child; and the only object of that unabated love was the mere dust of a dissolved frame. Such is heathenism! Melting and mournful thoughts steal over the recollections of the bereaved Christian mother too; and time has no power to dry up the fountain of her tears. Years may pass away; but the memory of the forms over which she has hung with maternal fondness suffers no decay; it keeps its place to the last hour of the most extended life. But, when she thinks of her children, she thinks of them as in heaven, not as in the grave; she knows the result,—the resurrection from the dead; and, urged onward by this hope through her remaining pilgrimage, she hastens to embrace them again in the kingdom of God. What a contrast in death has been created among the sable population of these colonies by Christianity! The harsh sounds of pagan grief and carousal have, in ten thousand instances, given place to the solemn hymn of praise which celebrates the entrance of another redeemed

spirit into the mansions of light; the storm of passionate grief, to the calm resignation of piety; and the sad pressure of despair, to the lightened feeling of a hallowed hope. The negro burial grounds have, during the last forty years, presented spectacles once unknown,—funeral trains, preceded by the Christian pastor, consigning to the mansions of the dead those who, when living, had been taught from his lips how to die, and pronouncing, with a confidence delightfully cheering to his future labours, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!"

This is a feeble sketch of the good effected by the missions in which you have, with so much zeal and benevolence, interested yourselves; and, feeble as it is, and much as it falls below an adequate representation of their efficiency, I am persuaded, that, by my thus recalling to your minds facts with which most of you are familiar, you will be induced to bind yourselves anew to this work of mercy, and, as a society, to take your full share in the exertions which yet are necessary to banish the remaining darkness which broods over these interesting islands, and to bring the whole slave population into the fold of the Church of Christ.

IV. I call your attention, finally, to a few circumstances tending to encourage your zeal and perseverance.

1. The first is the public recognition which has been made by parliament and by the government of the country, of the necessary connection between the Christian instruction of the slaves, and the amelioration of their civil condition.

This is a principle, the force of which has always been felt by observant men; it has been acknowledged and acted upon by many bene volent planters abroad, and the effects produced upon the character of the Christianized slaves by missionary labours have been an ample comment upon it. It is, indeed, certain, that just and beneficent legis lative measures can proceed but few steps without supposing the pre vious or concurrent influence of religion upon those for whom they are intended; and of this the order in council for Trinidad, which contains the plan of government for bettering the condition of the slaves, is itself a proof. You legislate for the removal of the whip, as a stimulus to labour; and the ground assumed is, that man is a being capable of being governed by moral motives, and that it brutalizes him to treat him as an irrational animal. The principle is sound; but it is just in proportion as religion discovers to man his immortal and accountable nature, convinces him of the value of character, and shows him his interest in the mercies of God, that he feels more sensibly the distinction between himself and the inferior animals, yields more readily to human motives, and spurns, with a more elevated feeling, whatever is offensive to the just dignity of man. It refines, so to speak, the sense of humanity, and thus lifts up the degraded class above the level of embruted character. You legislate for the establishment of a Sabbath, that the worship of God may be observed; but this supposes both instruction in the principle, and habits of respect for the institution. Law may make a day of rest from toil, but it can do no more; a day of real worship, a Sunday, which shall exert a moral influence, is the sole work of religion. The same may be said of marriage, to which the pagan negroes are most averse; to the purchase of manumission, which supposes an industry, and a habit of economy, which never exist but

as rare exceptions, where religion has not, in some considerable degree, exerted its energy; and to the giving of evidence in courts of law, which necessarily supposes, in order to the full communication of the privilege, both the knowledge and the fear of God. Look, then, at the whole of that plan, and ask to what extent it can, by any possibility, be applied with efficiency among totally uninstructed and pagan slaves. It supposes Christianity, in some degree, to begin with; and it depends upon its diffusion for its full accomplishment. Religion and policy are combined in it, and wisely. Wise and beneficent laws can do little without Christianity, and Christianity is aided by wise and benevolent laws. Law is not to wait until Christian instruction is perfected; Christianity is not to delay till legislation has done its office. Both have their posts assigned them; but, to produce moral and civil amelioration fully among a slave population, both must act together, and each will derive strength from a mutual, simultaneous, and harmonious co-operation. All this is recognized in the order in council; and that very plan justifies your past efforts, and, indeed, tacitly applauds them. It encourages your persevering exertions; and you will not remit your efforts when you see them thus connected with all that is benevolent and wise in the plans of your rulers, and all that is hopeful in the advancing condition of your fellow creatures. I may add, too, that it will produce in you no feelings but those of satisfaction, to see a project for employing additional labourers in this long-neglected field emanating from the zeal of others. For myself, on principle approving of an ecclesiastical establishment, when connected with religious liberty and full toleration; convinced as I am of the great moral benefits which have resulted from the national Church, and are still resulting from it, at home; thinking it the solemn duty of every Christian government to place religious instruction within the reach of all its necessitous subjects,—I contemplate the plan of an establishment for the West Indies as the discharge of a long-neglected national obligation, and augur great good from it, if not immediately, yet ultimately. We have long been labouring in the work of negro instruction; we have been almost exclusively so in the majority of the colonies; but we welcome the establishment into this field of toil, reproach, and danger. Alas! how much of it must, after all the agents which can for a long time be sent out, remain untilled! a circumstance which would render party spirit on any side at once injurious and detestable, and stamp it with its most odious features of folly and of shame.

2. Another source of encouragement is the increased and increasing number of friends to the religious instruction of the slaves in the colonies themselves. This is to be acknowledged in thankfulness to God, and in justice to men. When we speak of men in masses, without discrimination, we must inevitably sin against charity or against truth. The proprietors of slaves are to be divided into two classes; and the same distribution may be made of the colonies themselves. Some are friendly to missionary exertions, and others are hostile. There are "who love darkness rather than light," and there are who love light rather than darkness. This is a place and an occasion which, on the one hand, forbids to flatter, and, on the other, to refuse "honour to whom honour is due." The majority of persons connected with slave property stand chargeable with criminal neglect, or the great proportion

of slaves would not now be degraded and immoral pagans. Not a few have been still more criminally hostile and persecuting. They have paced round their enclosures of darkness and vice, intent upon nothing so much as to scowl away the messengers of light and mercy, by whatever name they might be called, and to seal up the wretched people under their power in ignorance and barbarism. This has been the spirit of individuals in some islands, and the spirit of the community in others, as in Barbadoes and Demerara. But, still, in the colonies collectively religion has had its advocates, and slave instruction its fostering friends; and for a few past years the number has been increasing. Pious and benevolent proprietors, at home and abroad, have felt their responsibility to God, and have distinguished themselves by a generous flow of feeling to man; and to them the greater honour is due from us, because they too have had to bear the reproach of fanaticism, and have had to dare to be singular. By West Indian liberality have many of our numerous mission chapels been erected, repaired, and enlarged, our expenses relieved, and our missionaries in part supported; and, under patronage of the most respectable kind, they have often been protected from the malice of their assailants, and cheered and encouraged in their labours. In the midst even of the late agitations, the society has received a greater number of invitations to extend their labours than at any former period; and but that its funds will not yet permit such an exertion, thirty additional missionaries might be sent out this instant, with assurance of acceptance and openings for full and promising labour. This is surely a motive for unabated and even quickened activity. It is only in two or three of those colonies that men calling themselves Christians stand guard before every avenue of the kingdom of darkness, alarmed at the approach of every foot which is "shod with the preparation of the Gospel;" painfully and pitifully anxious that Satan should "keep his goods in peace," and placing all their hope of safety and prosperity in the perpetual exclusion of their slaves from the light and hopes of the Gospel. All this alarm at peaceful men and the peaceful Gospel which they preach would be ridiculous, did it not operate to obstruct a work of so much necessity and mercy. Better thoughts, we trust, will ere long prevail among this class of misinformed or prejudiced persons. For the colonies generally, they are largely open to your work of charity; in almost every place there are some who will give a cheering welcome to your missionaries; and in every place the negroes themselves are prepared to listen to the heavenly message; for, whatever else may be said of them, this cannot be alleged, that they turn away their ears from instruction. Plant your missionaries where you may, they will not fail to surround themselves with crowds of attentive negro hearers.

3. A third source of encouragement is the improvement which has taken place in the character of many white and free coloured people in the colonies.

To carry the influence of Christianity through a dark and neglected population many agents are necessary, beside clergymen and missionaries. If we look around upon our own country, and observe through how numerous channels the stream of instruction and moral influence is poured, and the impulses which it receives in its course by the various operations of philanthropic and Christian activity, we shall

be convinced of this. Here rank, influence, property, the ntelligence and activity of thousands in the middle ranks of life, and the hallowed offerings and valuable co-operations of the pious poor, are all combined to remove the ignorance and correct the vices of society; and with all this, much remains to lament, and much to be accomplished. The importance of this ample co-operation of many and various agents is, however, manifest; and as to home improvement, we found our best hopes upon it. For a long period this was entirely wanting in the West India colonies, and still exists but partially; but it is growing up with that improving character which distinguishes both white and coloured free persons, in a few instances, in the worst of the colonies, and to a very encouraging extent in the majority of them. There was a time when the scene presented by West Indian society was almost unmitigated; when it was an almost unvaried mass of human suffering on the one hand, and dissipation and immorality on the other; when little was seen but the harsh lord and the despairing slave; gloomy servitude and a proud and vexatious tyranny; when almost every youth who was sent from the parent country to take up his residence there, however generous in his nature, however fortified by his education, plunged into an atmosphere thick with the moral infection, and lost, by a rapid process, his humanity, his principles, and his morals. Here was the reaction and the curse of slavery; it had its revenge in the corruption and moral death which spread around it. Men in possession of Christian truth refused to apply the corrective to paganism, and paganism turned its transforming power upon them: the white man became black; and the slaves over whom he ruled only served to exasperate his temper, and to give vigour to his passions; they provoked his pride, irritated his anger, plunged him in sensuality, obdurated his heart, and fixed upon the Christian name the degrading marks of a heathen character. But better and brighter scenes have now, for many years past, been displaying themselves, partly by the influence of the rising spirit of religion in the parent country extending itself to the colonies, and partly by the direct operations of piety and zeal in the colonies themselves. The benevolent planter, the religious manager, are not unfrequently seen. Many persons resident in towns, of respectable rank in society, have, for some years, given, and are still giving, the influence of their station and the activity of their endeavours to do good. The moral character of the free coloured people, all of whom are intelligent, many of them well educated and possessed of property, has, in many islands, presented a visible and cheering improvement, in spite of the demoralizing effect naturally resulting from that most unchristian and impolitic prejudice indulged by the whites generally against them on account of their colour, and their being considered as a degraded class. A very large number of the females of this class especially are rising into character under the influence of religion. The concubinage to which formerly they were doomed, almost without exception, to white men, or to men of their own colour, has, in many instances, on the older mission stations, given place to honourable marriages. The character of this class of females has been rescued from its former degradation: character having been given to them, esteem has followed; and, instead of the coloured women being as formerly, and as a matter of course, the objects of seduction, in those islands where the missions

have been longest established, there are many who, for piety and delicacy of mind and conduct, are not exceeded in any part of the world. From the matrimonial connections which have been thus formed, founded on mutual esteem, families are now training up in the fear of God, and under the influence of religious example and education; and it is among those eminently exemplary and excellent females of colour, which your missions may place among their most interesting trophies, that we now find teachers for our schools, patronesses and visiters of benevolent societies, instructers and guardians of the virtue of female youth, and active and talented agents for many other offices of pious charity.

Finally, the blessing of God upon our work commends it to our affection and perseverance.

Were we now, for the first time, called to enter upon this scene of labour, and to make the experiment upon the negroes of the colonies and on their native continent, undirected by experience, uncheered by success, and surrounded with the chilling prophecies of failure, it would still be our duty to set forth. The solemn obligation to repair past neglects, to redeem our character, and to show compassion to our perishing brethren, would all demand that we should make the attempt in the face of the world's scorn and the world's anger. To others was assigned that task. Revered men! they waked while the world and even the Church slept; they dropt the tear over scenes which all looked upon with indifference; they regarded, as the purchase of the Saviour's sufferings, a race which others had chased out of the family of man, or on which had been fixed the mark of Cain or the curse of Canaan. Perhaps they trembled while they made the experiment.—Strong as was their faith, did it never falter, when not only the insulting white, but the degradation of the pitied race itself seemed to scoff the effort; and when, through every chamber of that vast sepulchre of souls, dead in sin, a forbidding voice seemed to issue, "Can these dry bones live?" Perhaps it did falter. The language of the anxious hearts of the first Christian labourers, pressing forward in a work as yet uncheered by a conversion, and often cheated by fallacious promises of a success which only bloomed to wither, might, perhaps, often be, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!" The prayer was heard. Faith, small as a grain of mustard seed, has the prerogative of removing mountains. They went out weeping, "bearing precious seed;" and the very earliest labourers came again "rejoicing, bringing the sheaves with them." They opened the path to their successors, who have carried out the work to the extent in which it now presents itself; and thus it has descended to our cares, stamped and charactered with the most obvious proofs of a Divine sanction and of the special co-operation of God. What else could have produced the effects which we now behold? Unpatronized by power, uncheered by a smile, often persecuted, always ridiculed, counteracted by demoralizing circumstances, watched with suspicion,—this was its history for many years; yet in those years it had, from among a heathen population, raised up thousands, of whom one, who had a large acquaintance with the fact, says, with a truth which might be established by many specific instances, were you not familiar with them:—

"However debased by vice the slaves were in the days of their

ignorance, they are now sober, chaste, industrious, and upright in all their dealings. Nor is this all; they are eager, punctual, and persevering in all the services of devotion. Their domestic circle is distinguished by the daily exercise of prayer and praise; and the Sabbath is called 'a delight, the holy of the Lord,' and spent in the solemnities of his sacred worship. This is indeed wonderful! In a country where the Sabbath is devoted to public traffic; where, comparatively speaking, marriage is not so much as thought of; and where it is common to indulge in the most debauched inclinations, without the least restraint,—to see them keeping the Sabbath day holy, renouncing all their criminal connections, and standing forth as examples of purity and religion, is manifestly the Lord's doing; for nothing short of the power of God could obtain a victory like this over habit, example, and such corruption of the human heart."

Into a work, thus marked by the Divine blessing, you are called to enter with renewed vigour; and since it has thus succeeded, and is still in vigorous and hopeful operation; since it is increasing yearly its friends and patrons, and has excited others to commence similar enterprises of religious charity; and especially since we see the cause of negro instruction and protection engaging the attention and interests of all classes of our countrymen,—can we doubt that the delightful time is hastening, when Africa and all her sons shall partake, after ages of desertion and injury, the full mercies of the Gospel? It is one of the most cheering harbingers of this consummation, that the nations of the earth are staying the ravages which have for ages wasted her shores; that two of the most powerful maritime states, our own country and the United States of America, have at length raised their principles to the only proper standard by which such outrages can be truly judged, and have declared the slave trade piracy. Thus "the shields of the earth, which belong unto the Lord," have thrown the protecting shadow of their justice over those defenceless coasts where the Christian name has been most deeply dishonoured, and the rights and feelings of men have been most criminally outraged. But the spiritual mercies branch off in more numerous streams, and pour forth for Africa a more copious current. We need no laborious and critical investigation to determine whether "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God;" no prying into the mystic counsels of Heaven, to ascertain whether "the time to favour her, yea, the set time, be come." Go to the colonies, where her sons are in captivity: scarcely is there one of them where this society alone has not one or two, in many five or six, sacred buildings for worship and instruction devoted to their use, and which they regard as peculiarly their own. One colony I except. Sacrilegious hands there rent it to the earth, and denied to the negro his "house of prayer." But that is a solitary monument of shame. For the rest, in those crowded congregations, in those spacious edifices, Ethiopia already "stretches out her hands unto God," and, led by the light which creates our Sabbaths, meets us at the same throne of grace, and receives, with us, the benedictions of the common Father and the common Saviour. And the prophetic promise is dawning upon parent Africa also. Hottentots, Caffres, Boschuanas, Namaquas, Corranas, Griquas, in the south, Bulloms, Foulahs, and Mandingos, in the west, some of all your tribes are already in the fold, and hear and love the voice of the great

Shepherd. We hail you as our brethren! the front ranks of all those swarthy tribes which are deeply buried in the vast interior of an unexplored continent, you stretch out your hands unto God, as a signal for the tribes beyond you; and the signal shall be followed, and every hand of thy millions, Africa! shall raise itself in devotion to thy pitying Saviour, and every lip shall, ere long, modulate accents of grateful praise to thy long-concealed but faithful God.

God is eminently with us in this "labour of love;" nor is it the least important of the indications of his presence, that he whose prerogative it is to send forth labourers into this harvest is conducting the steps of so many into the African field; that a number of holy men, from year to year, have infused into their hearts a special compassion for this race, and prefer to ease at home, and the peace and credit of the Christian ministry in their native land, the danger, the toil, and the reproaches, which still attend the work of negro instruction. Let the memory of those who have finished their work be blessed; of those who have burnt in fevers, languished in prisons, sustained with meekness the scoffs and jests of the impious, and sunk into a premature grave. Their "reward is on high," and their "work with their God." And, as to those who now endure the cross and glory in it, whether they labour under the suns of the West Indies, or in western Africa breathe pestilential air, or in the southern parts of that continent toil over hills and through deserts, "to seek and to save that which is lost," let these be witnesses to us, on the part of God, that he is with us.—What gold could purchase such instruments? What education could form them? What implanted principle of human action, where wealth, and honour, and ease, are all absent, could send them forth? They are the instruments of Heaven, prepared to our hand and for our use, and indicating, by the very nature of their preparation, the special use to which we are to apply them. They are the agents to carry forth our charities to the heathen, to bear our light into the darkness we pity, and our mercy into the misery over which we sigh. Without them we should sigh in vain, and our sympathies would terminate in ourselves; by them we reach and relieve the case of destitute millions, and transmit the blessedness of which we are anxious that all should partake. Thus, man is made a saviour to his fellow, and the creature of a day the instrument of conveying blessings which have no bound but a limitless eternity itself!

Enter, then, more fully into the spirit of the text, and "honour all men." I love these brief and general sentiments of benevolence which come upon us so suddenly and with such frequency in the New Testament. They show fulness, and the fulness of a more than human kindness. If uninspired man had uttered them, he would have felt them to be so novel, so far removed out of the common course of the thoughts and feelings of mankind, and would have anticipated so many objections, that he must have thought it necessary to accompany them with the ingenuity of apology and the labour of argument. But their very manner shows that they come from God. It is for him to be authoritative; and they are uttered in the appropriate form of law: it is in him only that goodness exists in infinite fulness; and these precepts of charity are its affecting manifestations, the gushings of that yearning tenderness with which he regards all his creatures. O God! it is from thee

that we learn to love one another; to love man, because thou lovest him: to "honour him," because "thou hast set thy heart upon him." When from these views and principles we go forth into the world, what contrasts do we behold! Is man loved and honoured by man? The fiercest beasts of the gloomy forest are not to him what he is to his kind: theirs is the ferocity of hunger, his that of malignity; theirs is appetite, his is passion. But there is a redeeming power at work in our world; and that is the word of the living God, the Gospel of peace and salvation. Wherever that comes, it is a shield to the defenceless and a refuge for the oppressed. Orphans find in it a Father, widows a Husband, slaves a Master in heaven, the wronged and spurned "a Judge in his holy habitation." What sorrows has it cheered! what injuries has it arrested! what benevolent creations has it spread around us! How soft are its tones of pity! how loud its denunciations of wrong and violence! The yearnings of philanthropy, the ardour of missionary zeal, the active love of our neighbour, the awful equity of law, the loftiness of patriotism, are all its own. These are the blessings which it has conferred at home, and these are the effects which it is working abroad. With this high commission, it is charged by its Divine Author to visit every land, "to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." O when shall this "glorious Gospel of the blessed God" dawn upon all lands? when shall it wipe away all tears? when shall floods clap their hands, and forests wave instinct with the universal gladness, and hills rejoice, and valleys sing, and the Gentiles of every lip and name "glorify God for his mercy!" Said I, "When shall it dawn?" Where is the land on which it dawns not? The illustrious morning breaks, and the shadows fly away! In the most distant wildernesses and deserts of the world, deserts never till of late vocal with the sound of salvation, the voice of the heralds of the universal Saviour-King is at length heard:—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God: every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

In behalf of one branch of those great operations which the Church of Christ is carrying on to hasten this consummation, you have been now addressed. To your care and liberality the negro missions in the West Indies are commended. Remember the immense number of pagan and uninstructed slaves which remain; and suffer me to leave upon your minds a strong impression of your duty respecting them, by closing what I have said with an extract from the work I before referred to. Melancholy it is, that, after the lapse of one hundred and fifty years, such an appeal should be so applicable, and that so much should yet remain to be done, and so many difficulties and obstacles to be encountered. Thus the author of "The Negro's Advocate" pleaded in the year 1660; and, though dead, he yet speaketh to us:—

"Let us consider, that we have no more dispensation for our silence than the apostles, with other succeeding holy bishops and priests, had, who first planted and watered the Church with their blood, and went

about and preached every where, when it was death to be a Christian; —that faith is an active and prolific grace, and cannot remain in idleness, but must operate and employ that heavenly heat which it receives from above, for the use of others;—that there is no neutrality in this war; and that whoever is not actually in arms, prepared to fight against sin and infidelity, is to be reputed a conspirator with them;—that there is the same heaven and salvation proposed for the conversion of slaves as of more illustrious grandees; the whole being but the saving of souls; the effecting of which upon but a very few is worth the labour of many all their lives. Even we, no less than St. Paul, are debtors 'to the Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise.' And God hath, by an extraordinary providence, brought these people to our very doors, to try our justice, and to see whether we will pay his debt, unto which, if ever any did, each soul of us does stand most firmly obliged. Look upon them, and you cannot but see in their countenances the lively effigies of St. Paul's Macedonian, imploring your help: and O! let not the blood of souls cry from the earth for vengeance against us. Reflect but upon the sad doom denounced against the fearful and unbelieving, Rev. xxi, and remember that the first great founders of our faith were no cowards. Think what shame it is, that we have given such just cause to the enemies of religion to reproach and triumph over our timidity, or, which is worse, our temporizing for filthy lucre. Nor let the opposition and peevishness of unreasonable men dishearten us; as knowing that our true portion is to be sent forth as sheep among wolves; and that success is, for the most part, the companion of a restless industry. Even so we, overlooking all difficulties, and pressing still forward to the mark, if we faint not, may obtain that prize for which we set forth, and accomplish a work greatly tending to the glory of God, and to the happiness of these poor people's souls, no less than of our own. And O, were our duty, as St. Chrysostom sweetly exhorteth of piety and a virtuous life, faithfully complied with, 'we might soon, and even without miracles, convert the world.' 'Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,' as saith the apostle 'Let us be instant in season and out of season,' and keep back nothing of the whole counsel of God that is necessary for the souls of men."

May these sentiments deeply affect us, and all whose connection with the West India colonies especially binds them to uphold the credit of the Christian profession, and to manifest the zeal and kindness of Christian charity.

SERMON VI.—*God glorified in good Men.*

Preached at Great Queen-street Chapel, London, on Sunday, July 9, 1826, *on Occasion of the Death of Joseph Butterworth, Esq., late M. P. for Dover.*

"And they glorified God in me," Galatians i, 24.

I HAVE been very unexpectedly called upon to improve this mournful occasion. So far as my compliance with the request of the executors of our lamented friend may be regarded as an expression of respect and

veneration for his memory, it was, on my part, a compliance most cheerful and prompt: in every other respect it has imposed a burden upon me; the weightiest part of which is, that I stand in the place of others, whose more intimate acquaintance with the deceased, and whose general qualifications, would have enabled them to do greater justice to his character, and more effectually to impress upon you those solemn lessons which events like that which we deplore, strokes of mortality more than usually eminent and afflictive, are intended by Divine Providence to array before our eyes, and to convey with emphasis to our hearts.

To the duty which has been laid upon me, I must now, however, by Divine assistance, address myself; and if I may plead, on the one hand, my want of a more intimate acquaintance with our departed friend, for that absence of instructive anecdote, and of that minuter tracery of character, which an intimate friend might have supplied, the additional impartiality which I may derive from the absence of so powerful a bias as a long and intimate friendship with a character so potent to awaken affection, may give greater force to those general sketches and outlines, which only it is in my power to present.

Is it, then, your intention, you perhaps ask, to pronounce a eulogy upon the departed? I refer you to my text as an answer: "And they glorified God in me." The Apostle Paul, having been converted to the faith he once persecuted, was eminently faithful to his vocation from Heaven. He conferred not with flesh and blood; he commenced his glorious career of evangelical labour in Arabia and Damascus; for three years this new apostle had there displayed the rudiments of that high and gifted character, which has given to him an imperishable name in the annals of the Christian Church; and a full report of his conversion and conduct had been made to the apostles and the Church at Jerusalem. Did they then boast of the acquisition of the disciple of Gamaliel? Did they turn his learning, his talents, his energy, his miraculous powers, his deep and heavenly wisdom, into matter of party vanity and creature dependence? They had not so learned Christ; but, tracing the stream to its fountain, "they," says the apostle, "glorified God in me;" and in this dispensation of mercy to a distinguished individual, at once acknowledged his rich endowments, and the efficacy of that victorious grace by which they had been sanctified to the noblest uses, and subordinated to the advancement of the best of causes.

The lesson which we are taught is of great importance. We are taught to honour God in man, and man in God. We are taught to avoid, on the one hand, all creature idolatry; and, on the other, that cynical severity, or ungrateful indifference to the Author of all good in man, which undervalues or neglects the excellencies which ought to be held up to admiration, that they may be imitated by ourselves and others. Each of these extremes robs God of his just revenue of grateful praise.

Lamentable, indeed, is the case of the man who can walk among the splendours of this material world, and behold the sun pavilioned in his own glory, creating our days, tempering our seasons, and spreading around us, wherever we turn, scenes of grandeur and beauty, without thinking of that higher and uncreated Light of which his brightness is but the shadow. Nor is the case alleviated should he add philosophy

to religious apathy, and be able to calculate the sun's distance from our earth, and to lay down the laws by which his rays deck the world with colours, and bring out the various forms of the objects which surround us. The undevout pryings of the philosopher are even more shocking to a well-regulated moral feeling, than the thoughtless gaze of the multitude.

But then, on the other hand, would it not be preposterous to teach, that, in order to secure the glory of creation to God, it is necessary to disregard the excellency of his work; and that, in order to keep our minds worthily fixed upon the perfections of God, and to avoid giving honour to the sun because of his splendour, we must forget or deny that he shines, and that his rays do in reality array the world in beauty, and spread life through all its elements?

We apply this to men. In what does creature idolatry consist, but in honouring, and trusting in, the natural and acquired excellencies of creatures, to the exclusion of God? It is thus that their powers are exaggerated in our estimation, as to their degree; and it is thus that we assign to them an uncontrolled efficiency, and criminally depend upon them.

But "cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Man still remains connected with and controlled by God, whether we mark that connection and dependence or not. Trust we in his wisdom? God turns the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.—Trust we in his power? He stretches out his arm in the plenitude of his self confidence; and the unseen, unacknowledged power withers it in its might, so that the king of ten tribes cannot "pull it back to him again." Trust we in his life? It is a vapour, which a breath scatters; it is "the grass of the earth, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven."

But is there, then, no wisdom, no might, no excellence in man? As it were absurd to deny this, it would be affectation to pretend to overlook it. What good, and what evil, may not man effect! We at once acknowledge his weakness, and tremble at his power. But let us consider him in God. "Men," says the psalmist, "which are thy hand,"—his hand, by permission, to vex and punish,—his hand, by commission, to bless. Have they wisdom to instruct us? It is light from him. Have they power? It is supplied by his energy. Is their life lengthened? It is in his mercy to them and to society. Admire and deny not, then, this wisdom; acknowledge this efficiency, and affect not to lower its estimate; only "glorify God, who worketh all in all." If he has chosen any of them to be more eminently his instruments, for the furtherance of his purposes of mercy to mankind, he does it by virtue of his sovereignty, which has the right to make vessels of honour, or of inferior honour, or of dishonour: if he continues their useful lives, while you have their light, rejoice in the light, and glorify Him from whom it comes, as its original and source; and when he chooses to quench these stars of his right hand in the darkness of death, still glorify him. As to us, this is to remind us of our dependence upon Him who appointed their orbit, and invested them with their different degrees of glory; and as to them, though their lustre fades from these visible skies often while we most fondly gaze upon it, it is that it may be rekindled in superior glory in the kingdom of their Father.

On this principle of glorifying God in man it is, that I shall now proceed to present you with a general view of the character and conduct of our venerated and departed friend. I call upon you not to magnify him, but "the grace of God in him;" and whatsoever things were pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report in him; if there be "any virtue, any praise" in his remembered character, I beseech you to think of these things. "Be ye not slothful, but followers," imitators, "of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

I begin with that which is of the first importance to every man, and which is the only true key to character,—with Mr. Butterworth's conversion to the true knowledge and faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The man of the world here stumbles, and perhaps mocks. But, whether Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, can comprehend it or not, still the word of eternal truth remains steadfast and unchangeable,—"Ye must be born again." There is, if our Bible be not a fable, this broad and marked distinction among men,—"the natural man," and "the spiritual man;" in other words, man as he is by nature, and man as he is when renewed by the transforming influences of the Holy Spirit.—So necessary also, be it remembered, is this change, that "except a man be" thus "born again," except he be made by this mystic second birth what he is not, and cannot be, by his natural birth, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." To admit the conviction of our sin and danger, to confess them before God, to plead with all the earnestness of an awakened spirit for the pardon of past transgressions, through the merit of the atonement of Christ, and, by an entire trust in that, as the only ground of our acceptance as sinners before God, to seek that "renewing of the Holy Ghost," by which "old things pass away, and all things become new," is the only process from the natural to the spiritual state of man; from death to life. Through this process was the mind of our departed friend conducted; it was in his experience clear and definite in all its parts; and it issued in that decided change of heart which gave so strong a character to his future life. The son of a pious dissenting minister of the Baptist persuasion, and religiously educated, he had still to prove how true is that saying of the evangelist, that the sons of God "are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:" that, unspeakable as are the advantages of a religious education, yet that religion itself is not hereditary; and that this work in the heart of man is, in the most emphatic sense, the work of God. Into the circumstances which led on, and, by the mercy of God, were followed by, this change, we need not enter; it is sufficient to say, that, by God's blessing upon the ministry of Dr. Adam Clarke, his relative by marriage, he was awakened to a deep sense of his natural corruption and danger as a sinful man; and that, led by the light of those evangelical views which he had received from education, and which were now farther opened to his mind by conversation with a new circle of religious friends, he sought pardon and personal acceptance with God through Christ, and did not seek in vain. He was not left in doubt and uncertainty. He had been instructed, that he who believeth "hath the witness in himself;" and that "the Spirit itself witnesses with our spirits," upon our justification before God, "that we are the sons of God." He claimed these promises, and attained them; and his experience was henceforward marked

with cheerful confidence: no gloomy shadows hung over his views of God, or upon his prospects of the future. Nothing was farther removed from him than religious despondency or doubt; and while humility, and a deeply reverential spirit in every thing which brought him especially near to God, were in him graces of an eminent character, he habitually "joyed in God, by whom he had received the atonement;" and showed to all who had the benefit of his acquaintance, how truly "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and her paths paths of peace." His was a heart at rest with God and with itself, and which always spread the grateful influence of its own calmness and felicity upon all around him.

We pass on to what we may call the habitual religious character of the deceased. "We count them happy," says the apostle, "that endure." To begin well in a religious course is so important, that future experience often takes its character from it. He who enters not in by the strait gate finds not the way which leadeth to life; he, the foundations of whose religion are not laid in the depths of self abasement, and a lively faith in the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, builds upon the sand, and his house will not bear up against the rocking of those winds with which it must be assailed, and the beating of those waves which seasons of temptation shall heave against it. But perseverance crowns the whole; and I have heard of no decline, no slackening of the religious course of our friend now with God. Certainly since I have had the pleasure of frequent intercourse with him for the last ten years, I have observed on all occasions the manifestations of a devout and ardent piety; a heart alive to sacred things, and tuned to accord with all that was hallowed in its tendency, whether of glory to God, or good will to men. His life was evidently a life of faith in the Son of God; and, without the least affectation, (for his character was one of great simplicity,) he appeared ready to every good word and work. There was in him an even flow of spiritual mindedness, uninterrupted by the numerous and varied engagements of an active life; and he was in this respect, I conceive, an eminent instance of that mighty influence which a mind "stayed on God" exerts over the busy affairs of life, subduing them to its own tranquil dominion, and gently guiding them with unruffled flow, each into its proper channel.

But if on Mr. Butterworth's religious character I may be allowed to be a little more minute, I would regard it as strongly marked in the following particulars:—

It was devotional. To the duties of the closet, prayer, and meditation on the Scriptures, his attention, I have reason to believe, was strict and faithful; but I pry not there where he, according to the injunction of his Lord, having entered into the closet, "shut the door, and prayed to his Father in secret;" and we may rather judge of the efficacy of those exercises by that constancy and strength which he derived from them; by that "rewarding openly," of which he was so obviously an instance.

The religious ordering of a family, and the observance of the Sabbath, are more open to remark; and here the devotional character of our departed friend had an edifying manifestation. The service of his domestic altar was regular, serious, and lively. This was not with him matter of compliance with a form; but as the priest of his household

he offered gifts and sacrifices with hallowed hands, and hallowed fire. He commenced life, and was at the head of a family before his conversion; and the introduction of family worship was therefore attended with a struggle; but when once begun, it suffered no interruption. It was regarded as a business, not an incident; there was in his house no guilty shame of bowing the knee to God; the duty was never made to give place to inferior concerns; the appointed hour was sacred; and the family circle of worshippers opened to receive, not to fly from the presence of visitants and strangers.

The hour of seven o'clock on the morning of the Sabbath found him in the vestry of this chapel in the exercise of the office of a class leader; an office in our society which he held for near thirty years, and discharged with a regularity, faithfulness, and affection, never to be forgotten by many excellent persons still on earth, over whose religious progress he watched; and by many in heaven, to whose preparation for the rest they now enjoy with God, his admonitions and advices, by the Divine blessing, so greatly contributed. Neither the distance from his residence, nor the most unfavourable weather in the depth of winter prevented his punctual attendance at this early hour; and to his pious and judicious counsels and fervent prayers many young persons especially, who met in his class, owed their conversion and religious establishment.

To his household that sacred day was a day of rest and quiet; the Sabbath of the Lord was there "accounted honourable, a day of delight;" and to more extended family services, and the most conscientious attendance at the house of God, he frequently added visits of piety and mercy to the dwellings of the poor and destitute. Thus to his friends, and also to his servants, was his house made "the house of God," and in not a few instances "the gate of heaven;" the pious among them were edified; and as to others, previously careless of religious concerns, their admission into his family proved the means of their introduction into the family of God.

His personal religion was social. It neither confined him in retirement, nor detained him wholly among the active scenes of external life It is indeed remarkable, how a man who lived so much for others, who had upon him the cares of an extensive private business, and who, exclusive of his parliamentary engagements, was in the committees, and took so active a part in the management of so many public charities, could enjoy so much of home. His house was, however, eminently a home; and it brought with it its full share of enjoyment. Kindness of heart, and serenity of manner, a manner at once frank and dignified, collected about him, almost constantly, smaller circles of select, or larger companies of more general acquaintance; and both to him and his visiters the time thus spent was at once refreshing to the spirits, and improving to the heart. The kindliness of his own nature insensibly diffused itself through the society thus collected; and under the presiding dignity of the Christian host, the tone of a right and religious feeling was preserved unbroken. I have met with few men who possessed in so high a degree the great but rare art of leading on an instructive or a directly religious conversation without stiffness and effort. He made the various circumstances and talents of his guests to contribute their part to the general edification; led each to converse

on those subjects with which he was most familiar; and thus placed the whole at ease with themselves and with each other.

To young persons he was especially and attractively benign, affectionately affording them his counsel, stimulating them to exertion, and showing a solicitude for their best interests, the more impressive and influential, as it was free from all austerity, and carried with it the soft and penetrating influence of an unaffected benevolence. This was not confined to the young persons of his immediate connections; it was a characteristic which showed itself on a large scale, and with a most amiable uniformity. To be the guide and the friend of young men in the commencement of their career of life, and when thrown upon the dangers and hazards of the metropolis, became in him so much a habit, that he seemed to be drawn almost instinctively to this important but often neglected species of philanthropy. Many witnesses of this, perhaps, hear me at this time; and many more there are in respectable and creditable situations in life, who owe much to his efficient help, as well as to his valuable counsels, and his almost paternal superintendence. He was always anxious also to train up young persons to usefulness; and he constantly inculcated it upon them, that the most effectual means of gaining spiritual good for themselves, was to strive to do good in every possible way to others. It was, therefore, his constant endeavour to engage them in some work of benevolence, as Sunday school teachers, visiters of the sick and poor, or agents of the Strangers' Friend and other useful societies.

To these particulars I must add his truly catholic spirit. It is one of those marks of character which St. Paul directs Titus to observe in ordaining to the office of bishop, that the candidate should be "a lover of good men;" by which he intimated that in this grace, as well as in every other, he ought to be an example to the whole body of Christians, and raise up the members of his charge to the standard of his own charity. We know too well how greatly the Churches of Christ have departed from this rule, and how often their honours have been reserved to crown the haughty brows of the fierce and fiery zealot. Sad and humbling, truly, is the picture which the different societies of Christians have presented through many succeeding ages. With shame we must acknowledge that "the spirit which is in them has lusted to envy;" and when they have not engaged in direct hostilities within those sacred precincts, where the "peace" which Christ breathed upon his disciples ought ever to have maintained its calming influence over their hearts, yet how sedulously have indifference and selfishness employed themselves to pile up their icy barriers around the different divisions of the Church, and to restrain those tides of generous feeling, which were designed to roll through the expanse of the common ocean, to the mere creeks and gulfs which indent its shores!

We are told that brighter rays have of late begun to break through those vapours of earthly passion which for so many ages have obscured the character of genuine Christianity; and we rejoice to admit the fact; but the change is still so limited and partial, that the truly catholic spirit is, alas! not yet a common but a special and peculiar characteristic. In proportion then to the rareness and value of this virtue, let us glorify God in all who have most carefully cultivated and most eminently exemplified it. Wherever they are found, and what-

ever may be their condition, they present us with the only perfect image of our Divine religion, as it came fresh and unstained from the hands of its Author, and was displayed before the world in the charity of the pentecostal Churches. The disciples were then "of one heart and of one soul;" and when that blessed hour of universal concord and love shall again arrive, the Church shall again assume her omnipotence over the world, and the world shall believe that Christ was sent of God.

Such, in an eminent degree, was the spirit and temper of the deceased. Without laxity in his religious opinions; holding with tenacity, as the only foundation of hope, and the only source of spiritual life, those leading doctrines which among orthodox Christians are regarded as fundamental; the less important differences, which each party conscientiously regard and adhere to, as in their view more or less conformable to the Scriptures, and connected with edification, were never regarded by him either as a bar to religious friendship, or as an allowable check upon the flow of brotherly affection. In this respect his spirit had a truly noble bearing. He not only loved good men, of every name and country, but "his delight was with the excellent of the earth, and with the saints that excel in virtue." Every other consideration was by him lost sight of when a genuine character of "love to our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" was ascertained, or admitted on the judgment of a charity which hoped all things. Even the incipient manifestations of seriousness, and religious inquiry, and good desire, were sufficient to expand his heart, and to gain for all admission to his regards and sympathizing cares. Few men have had so extensive an intercourse with what is called the religious world. Educated a dissenter, and to his death a Wesleyan Methodist, (to which body he showed in his latter years a renewed and increased attachment,) he had a warm affection for the Church of England. He participated in her services, and saw with joy that revival of the spirit of religion among her ministers and members, which now promises results so important. He regarded all religious bodies, "holding the Head," Christ, as a part of his universal Church, and as working together in different degrees and departments for the spread of "the common salvation." He was thus fitted, on principle, heartily to cooperate with those religious and benevolent societies, which unite the wise and the good of different religious persuasions in their administration; and when persons of varying sentiments met at his social board, the voice of controversy never disturbed that harmony of feeling which united all as the followers of the same Divine Saviour, and the heirs of the same immortal hopes.

In the personal character of our departed friend there are yet one or two other traits to which I must briefly adver.

The first is zeal.

Zeal may exist without charity; but true charity and zeal are not only inseparable, but almost identical. Zeal is charity in action, an ardour fed by charity as its element, and deriving from it the elasticity and constancy of its activity. True as this is, yet the quality of true zeal is presented in some characters under aspects more marked and striking than in others. This is the case with the character before us; and if zeal may be described to be a fervent desire to accomplish any

object, accompanied with corresponding efforts, the life of the deceased would furnish many more illustrations than we have time to dwell upon, or even to glance at. Both the ardent and the practical characters of an elevated zeal were conspicuous in him, even in his lower charities, in which he was always anxious really to relieve the case, when it was once espoused; and, not content with merely bestowing a favour, counsel, oversight, and personal exertion were generally employed to render it as effectual as possible. These qualities were in a similar manner displayed on the larger scale of exertion required by the course of public business in which he was engaged; in those societies for the promotion of education and morals, for relieving the distresses of the poor, and assuaging the various calamities to which our nature is subject, of which he was a member; in the active part he took, from its commencement, in the concerns of that immortal institution, the British and Foreign Bible Society; and, above all, in the cause of missions,—a cause with him of the highest and most sacred character engaging most deeply the cares and interests of his heart, leading him to much laborious exertion, and calling forth some of the noblest exercises of his liberality.

With almost all missionary societies he was, I believe, more or less connected by pecuniary subscriptions, or by taking also some active part in promoting their interests; but, as the treasurer of the Wesleyan Missionary Society for several years, the chairman of its annual meetings, and one of the most constant and active members of its committee, a debt of deep and lively gratitude is specially due from us to his memory. The official situation which I have had the honour to hold in that society brought me into an intercourse with him on these subjects, both in public and private, which enables me to bear this testimony. The miseries of mankind, the sad effects of idolatry, ignorance, and superstition, as constantly presenting themselves in accounts received from every part of the earth, manifestly touched him with the tenderest compassion; and as an illustration of that practical character of his zeal to which I have adverted, he was always among the first to ask, when such accounts were read or stated in the committee, "What can we do to meet the case?" Pressing as the necessary expenditure of so large and increasing a missionary institution often was upon the fund of which he was the treasurer, and frequently as he was called to make advances to meet its exigencies, I never recollect him to have repressed a motion for enlarging the work of God in any promising direction, or not to kindle into holy anticipation at the prospect of extending the kingdom of our Lord into the dominions of darkness by some new and hopeful enterprise. Whatever of general or particular intelligence he had collected from his extensive acquaintance and correspondence, which might animate our efforts and inspire a renewed zeal, he failed not to communicate with an excitement of spirit which kindled the ardour of others; he left all timid and sordid calculations behind him; and with a lofty faith in God, and a full reliance upon the persevering liberality of the friends of missions throughout the country, he fulfilled among us a mission like that of Moses to the Israelites when he was commanded to "speak unto the people that they go forward." To this great cause of God and man, his heart was uniformly true; it engaged his warmest interests, and he might be said truly to care for

it. His pious and judicious counsels to missionaries going abroad; his affectionate conduct to those who had returned home after bearing the burden and heat of the day; and the energy with which he often inspired large assemblies collected at missionary anniversaries, or at the formation of missionary societies in the country, were the fruits of this deep and earnest feeling, this pure desire that all mankind might know and glorify God their Saviour.

Nor must we here omit to notice his great and praiseworthy exertions in the formation and support of that very extensive and blessed charity, the Stranger's Friend Society, which has been for so many years carrying relief and consolation, and often salvation, into the darkest and deepest recesses of poverty and sorrow, in every district of this metropolis; and also his great exertions in the education of the poor by Sunday schools. His time and his contributions were largely employed in this great and benevolent work. He was treasurer of the West London Sunday School Society, which has between three and four thousand children in its schools; and of these schools he was for twenty-five years a regular visiter and superintendent, constantly animating and cheering the committee and teachers in their exertions. Thousands of poor children have been indebted mainly to his exertions for being taught the principles of religion, and to read the Holy Scriptures.

To these instances of his zeal must be added his general benevolence. The extent of his charities to the poor will not be fully known till that day which will make manifest the works of all men whether good or evil. That they were extensive, systematic, and enlarged, in proportion as Providence smiled upon his affairs, we all know. The poor he had indeed "always with him." Few men, probably, engaged n extensive concerns, however disposed to this onerous but profitable and important duty, have visited so many of the abodes of sorrow, sickness, and poverty; none ever took to them a kinder heart, or a more liberal hand. His, too, were visits of piety as well as of mercy; he was their instructer in the word of God, and their mouth to God in fervent intercessions. One day in the week he appointed to receive, at his own house, the applications of all who needed pecuniary relief, or advice and assistance in various exigencies. His servant was once asked how many petitioners of this kind he had on that particular day admitted, and his answer was, "Near a hundred." Into all these cases he entered, not merely to proportion relief, or to devise means for their mitigation,—he took the concerns of the poor, as it were, upon himself; entered into their various cases, and carried their burdens in his own sympathies; as feeling conscientiously bound to do the work assigned him by his sense of duty with fidelity, and to make his charities at once discriminating and efficient.

One of the characteristics of a good man, given by David, which is not very common even among the religious and benevolent, was exemplified in him: "A good man showeth favour and lendeth." This species of charity he largely and disinterestedly exercised. It is one, we allow, which requires much prudence and skill to turn into a real benefit to the person favoured; but in the hands of so practical a man it often became a mode of relief, which at once spared the feelings of the applicant, (a point on which he always manifested a most praise-

worthy delicacy,) and often afforded the most permanent relief. Much was lent without any intention of repayment; much, too, was never repaid, and the bounty was abused; but in many instances these kindnesses proved a benefit, the fruits of which were at once grateful and permanent.

It was in the spirit of this his characteristic benevolence, that the stranger in a strange land found in Mr. Butterworth a ready and often an effectual friend. His intercourse with foreigners was frequent and extensive. Where relief was necessary, it was given; and where that was not needed, the hospitality of his table, his friendly counsel, his protection, or his assistance in accomplishing their various pursuits of business, literature, or curiosity, were afforded with a blandness of manner, and a warmth of interest, which have impressed upon the heart of many a foreigner sentiments highly favourable to the character of the country, and honourable to the Christian name. It was indeed in part with this view, as well as from the benevolence of his own nature, that he took a special interest in the concerns, and conferred favours upon many of these strangers. He felt anxious that the character of the country should not be tarnished abroad by relations of injuries, neglects, or defrauds, which those who might be cast into indiscriminate society were likely to sustain; and he wished also that these foreigners should be introduced to the society of religious and philanthropic persons, and become acquainted with the benevolent, educational, and religious charities of our country, in the hope of promoting their personal benefit, of enlarging their views, and of transmitting through them some seeds of truth, some leaven of hallowing influence, into their respective nations. The great interest which he took in some Persians, who a few years ago spent a considerable time in London,—in the Indian chiefs from Canada, who more recently came over on the concerns of their tribe,—and especially in many of the Spanish refugees now in town, was regulated greatly by this truly honourable and enlightened motive.

Such are the reasons we have to "glorify God" in the religious experience, character, and conduct of the excellent person whose loss we have all so painfully felt. He honoured God, and God honoured him; he "scattered abroad, and was increased;" he was blessed and "made a blessing." If it be required of me to point out also his faults and defects, I profess to you that if I knew any thing of habitual and weighty faultiness and frailty which very strongly operated to counteract the practical influence of the great excellencies which every day of his life exhibited, I should feel bound in conscience to state it, as matter of admonitory instruction. But I know of nothing which may not, on a right and as I think Scriptural interpretation, be resolved into infirmities, or aberrations rather of the judgment than of the heart. I have seen occasionally, but very occasionally, a little irritability under opposition; I have seen a few instances of what I thought unfounded prejudices; and an occasional hesitation of purpose when the opinions of those he respected were at variance. I have observed nothing more, and am not disposed to infer more. I am not one of those who indulge the notion that human nature, even under the renewing grace of God, must be so bad, that if faults be but keenly scented, they may in all cases be chased out of their lurking places, and exposed to the full cry of the hunters. We believe, rather, that God has cast "the

salt of healing into the corrupt waters" of man's nature, and that in every truly faithful man those waters are healed. That the healing process was extensive in the experience of our excellent friend, I have said enough to show. His heart was right with God, and his habits ever since I knew him those of a highly-matured Christian. "The work of God is honourable and glorious;" and to the full extent in which he has wrought his work of grace and sanctity in any man, let him have "the glory due unto his name." Such, says the Apostle Paul, was the sentiment of the Churches of Judea, as to himself: "And they glorified God in me."

I pass on, finally, to the public character which our departed friend for so many years sustained.

Mr. Butterworth became a public man, not by the influence of splendid abilities or eloquence; but by the force of character, strong natural talent, and almost unparalleled industry. As to that part of his public character which connects him with missionary societies, Bible societies, Sunday schools, and various other public institutions, little difference of opinion will exist among religious men. There is, it is true, "a world," to which all such men, and all such engagements, are objects of ridicule or malignant attack; but "the world knoweth us not;" and the charges of enthusiasm and fanaticism must now happily be so largely and honourably applied, that they can excite no sentiment but that of pity,—the weapons are feeble, and they are thrown by feeble arms. But when we enter into another field, the differences of opinion as to public men become more varied, and are influenced and chequered by multifarious interests and passions. How much every public man is liable to misrepresentation and unfounded censure, we all know.—This is a tax he must pay, in the present state of society, whatever his character may be, good or bad; whether his motives be patriotic or selfish. But the truly Christian patriot will not escape so well as others; for with all the hopes we may entertain of the advance of religious influence in our country, (and we have great reason to glorify God on this behalf,) we are not arrived at that state when the principles and claims of the Christianity of the Scriptures can be fully urged and advocated in the high places of society, and the seats of legislation, without exposing the men who fearlessly place themselves on this lofty ground, to a more than common share of rebuke. And yet we applaud our civil institutions, and with reason; but they are the results of a strict regard to the principles and spirit of our religion among our ancestors, which in these times would entitle their very founders, whom we profess to hold in admiration, to the sneering appellation of "saints," and the contemptuous badge of "fanatics." Had not the spirit as well as the name of religion acquired a deep hold upon the hearts and consciences of many of our ancient statesmen, they would not have struggled with so quenchless a heroism for those religious liberties on which mainly is built and secured the fortress of our civil freedom. And yet the infidelity or heartless Christianity of the day shall affect to turn with contempt upon those who would excite the same principles into activity, and who act upon them with the same serious conviction of their truth. "Ye hypocrites, ye build the tombs of the prophets; and yet stone them that are sent unto you," in the same spirit and with the same commission.

We may indeed look with gratitude, and even with admiration, upon the legislature of our country. It embodies in it more of honour, of integrity, of public spirit, of practical wisdom, than any body of similar functions in the world; or, perhaps, taking its history from the beginning, than any other which ever existed; and it comprehends men of a high and truly Christian character; but the influence of Christianity upon it, as a whole, is to be considered rather as reflex than direct; rather received from the country than emanating from itself. We dare not compromise truth so far as not to allow that it is, in many respects, far below its just standard, as the legislature of a nation professing the religion of the Bible. Who shall rise up in his place there, for instance, to propose to strengthen the laws against those fashionable murders, called duels, without hearing them defended on principles which scarcely an enlightened heathen would tolerate? or to propose a stricter enforcement of the Sabbath of the Lord, without being branded as a Puritan? or to suppress our barbarous and brutalizing gladiatorial spectacles, without hearing them advocated as necessary to promote the courage and the character of a Christian populace? or to plead the rights of animals to protection from cruelty, without being met by indifference or contempt? And, to go to higher and graver subjects, can we forget the long and difficult struggle, even in a British legislature, which it cost to abolish the traffic in slaves; and the insults heaped upon the honoured men who at last achieved that victory of humanity and principle? With what lingering and obstructed steps does the case of the colonial slave still drag itself onward into notice and advocacy! Grant that this great cause makes progress; yet, is it not humbling, deeply humbling, to us, that we, whose feet have been so "swift to shed blood," should be so slow to show mercy? We might enlarge the instances; but it is unnecessary. I have adverted to these topics, not to feed faction; (for, under any form which politicians may give to the legislature of a country, it must always be the epitome and the reflecting mirror of the country's own moral state;) but to remind you, that he who applies himself most diligently to infuse moral health into society is the highest patriot; and that, even in this age and country, the man who engages in public affairs avowedly on Christian principles, must stand prepared to endure reproach for their sake.

We grant, that characters comparatively undecided may often escape much of this, and that by compromises they do sometimes escape it. As many modern writers on science and philosophy evade the imputation of acknowledging God in his works, by the convenient substitute of the word nature, whose wondrous operations they may extol without the hazard of being thought devotional; so with these accommodating men, adroit circumlocutions, and an expert application of the style of a lower school, often serve them as convenient hiding places, while they still satisfy their own consciences that they do not wholly forget the guiding principles of their religion; and thus, by politic caution, and never approaching danger too near, they keep themselves from any strong suspicion of "saintliness." We have all observed this; we have seen it carried, in some instances, disgustingly and treacherously far; we have seen, for instance, men who have stood on the platforms of missionary and Bible societies, eloquently pleading there the cause, and painting the excellencies and the moral heroism of their respective

agents; and yet in their places in the legislature, voting with the stronger party, to stifle a just inquiry into the case of a persecuted and martyred missionary.

But there have been, and still are, men in the British parliament of a firmer mould and a loftier bearing; and deeply may we lament that age, infirmity, and the ravages of death, have of late been rapidly reducing the number. Our deceased friend was of this honourable band, though he acted with no party, small or great, on system, and, in the spirit of a true independence, followed the convictions of his own judgment. His parliamentary duties were reduced to the control of the same rule as the common course of his actions,—the fear of God. He never sought or received a favour in connection with this branch of his public life; and as to the motives which led him to seek a place in parliament, we had his own testimony from the chair of the last annual meeting of our missionary society. The ambition of this distinction, in such a country as ours, is itself an honourable one; but in him it was sanctified. His attention to this subject was first awakened by the proceedings on Lord Sidmouth's bill, which was so zealously resisted by the advocates of religious liberty through the kingdom, and to the defeating of which an active band of intelligent and prudent but zealous men with whom he was associated mainly contributed. It was suggested to his own mind by the reflections to which this affair led, that he might in that station probably do some service to the cause of religion and morality, and thus farther the best interests of society.—It was with this view, and not that of political distinction, that he entered upon that new scene; and, though not by a splendid, yet by a most useful, course of exertion, he faithfully served his country in two parliaments. His loyalty, which in him was a Christian principle, led him to a general support of government in all cases where faction pressed upon it, or anarchy threatened the state; but his love of civil and religious liberty was equally ardent and immovable; and he never betrayed his trust as a representative of the people by forsaking the standard of either. On several important committees, and especially on the education committee, his good sense and practical and diligent habits rendered him a very valuable member. His speeches in parliament were plain, but often very forcible; and he was always heard with attention, except when the spirit of party was under some strong excitement, or when, by some manly attack upon the mischievous principles of modern liberalism, he had provoked the not over courteous, and sometimes rude and heated, clamours of its partisans. He was not, however, turned aside from his course of duty; and if he had sometimes to meet the contempt of irreligious men, his frank and firm avowal of right principles, on some important occasions, called forth, on the contrary, the acknowledgments of some of the most respectable members of the house. It is his just praise, that, as a member of parliament, he bore a consistent testimony to "the truth" on all subjects of religion, morals, and humanity,—a testimony unadulterated by policy, and unwarped by cowardice.

It is matter of notoriety that he took an active and zealous part in parliament, in opposing the concession of political power to the Roman Catholics; and that, not only by the part he took in the debates on that question, but by the communication of various facts obtained by his

visits to Ireland, and his extensive correspondence with intelligent friends in that country, he made a deep impression upon the opinions of many upon this great and perplexing question. It is no part of my business here to give any judgment as to the soundness of his general views on a subject which has divided some of the wisest and most considerate men; but it is my duty to state the motives from which he acted, because I have had the means of knowing them.

His resistance to the Catholic claims did not arise, as it has been charged, from bigotry and intolerance. His generosity and kindness of spirit might alone be a sufficient presumption against that uncharitable conclusion. It arose,—whether his reasonings were right or wrong, is a question into which I enter not,—it arose from his very love of religious toleration and liberty, which he fully believed would in that degree be endangered in which the influence of popery should be admitted to operate within the legislature of this country. There were in his mind, with respect to this question, no uncharitable feelings toward the Catholics; but he viewed popery,—and in this, I think, all who rightly understand the subject must agree with him,—as a dangerous and destructive system of spiritual imposture and wickedness, hostile at once to manliness of intellect, to public virtue, and to the souls of men. He abhorred the system, but not the men; for his advocacy of education in Ireland, his zeal for the circulation of the Scriptures there, and many acts of a liberal beneficence, showed that his charity yearned over those who were immersed in its darkness, and inthralled in its superstitions.

Nor was he the advocate of the principle of excluding men from civil privileges and honours on account of their religious sentiments; but he thought that they had no title to claim a share in the administration of a free constitution like ours, whose very religion he conceived to be averse to the great principles of liberty on which it is founded; and he admitted not for a moment the pretence that popery has changed its character; for he saw the same principle of intolerance acted upon in all Catholic states as formerly, and had observed, in the late struggles in Ireland against the circulation of the word of God in any form, an avowed conspiracy among its priests and gentry, to rivet in perpetuity the chains of ignorance and degradation upon the people.

Many admit all the premises laid down so strongly in the mind of our departed friend on this subject, and yet come to a different practical conclusion as to the general question itself. It is not my office to attempt, in this place, to judge between them; but opposition to no measure could be more pure, and sincere, and conscientious in its principle, and less connected with hostile or unkindly feeling, than was that of Mr. Butterworth to the concession of legislative power and influence to the members of this subtle and persecuting Church.

On another great moral question I will say a few words,—the abolition of negro slavery. To that system, disgraceful at once to religion and humanity, and still a blot and shade upon our national character, he was, from principle and from feeling, an enemy; and though he differed at first, in a few respects, from some excellent persons, as to the mode to be pursued to promote its abolition,—a circumstance in which, I think, his over-caution somewhat misled him,—yet in this principle, which no Christian can abandon without being a traitor to

his faith, that Christianity and the enslaving of men are utterly incompatible, his heart was steadfast; and he justly thought that the principles of our religion compelled us, as a nation, as we would have the blessing of Heaven, to adopt effectual means for the ultimate and total extinction of slavery throughout every part of the British empire.

In the progress of this question, his heart was evidently more affected by it; and some of us will not soon forget the solemn manner in which, at the last anniversary of the missionary society, at the City-Road chapel, after adverting to the difficulties which the parliamentary advocates of the cause of our negro fellow subjects had to encounter, he called upon that large audience to join him in fervent prayer to almighty God, that they might be supported in their benevolent labours, and that their efforts might at length be crowned with the desired success.

Nor must we forget, in the public life of our friend, his frequent and successful advocacy of the duty and real policy of encouraging the spread of Christianity in the colonies and foreign dependencies of Great Britain. He abhorred both the principle and the folly of attempting to strengthen our political rule over those pagan nations whom God, in his providence, has placed under the British sceptre, by making a sacrifice of our duty as a Christian people to seek their conversion; and he united cordially with those who wisely took their stand upon that higher and divinely-sanctioned principle, "Righteousness exalteth a nation" On this ground, of sanctifying our power, and making it felt in mercy, he advocated the throwing the shield of our protection over the widows of India, and the abolition of the murders of a fanatical idolatry. By his efforts, too, several persecuting laws, passed in different colonies, were repealed; and for the degree of religious liberty which now exists in many of them we are in no small degree indebted to his activity. In a word, scarcely has any subject involving the interests of public religion and public morals been agitated, for the last twenty years, in which he did not take some part, either by the liberal use of the press, or by connecting himself with various societies, or by his exertions in his place in parliament.

I have thus endeavoured, however feebly, to pay a tribute of respect to the character of this excellent man. The last scene must now be adverted to. Mr. Butterworth had been for some time an invalid; and within the last three years he had experienced some severe attacks of sickness. Few constitutions, indeed, though guarded by the strictest temperance, and upheld by the influence of a peaceful and cheerful mind, could maintain themselves against that excess of laborious occupation which he rather courted than evaded. He was one of those many instances which show that, through the feebleness of nature, he who will live for others must shorten his own life. He felt this; but the ardour of his spirit urged him forward. Before his going to Dover on his canvass, he took a laborious excursion to Bath, Birmingham, and some neighbouring places, to preside in several missionary meetings. There were then evident marks of feebleness upon him; feebleness of body, not of mind. His ardour in the cause of Christ was never more conspicuous; his addresses on such occasions were never more exciting. The fatigues of the election at Dover do not appear to have been excessive; nor did any chagrin at his failure there affect his equanimity or his cheerfulness. He regarded it as a providential

dismissal from the more active duties of a public station; and in his conversations with his friends immediately after his return, he anticipated, with great satisfaction, the additional leisure he should have to devote, partly to reading and retirement, and partly to the promotion of religious and benevolent objects, and "especially," as he said, "to the great cause of missions."

With respect to the contested election at Dover, it gave him satisfaction to reflect that he had not spent money to gratify the corrupt cupidity of the multitude; and to two friends he emphatically said, after his return to town, "I thank God that, upon a review of the whole scene, I can say I have come out of it with a clear conscience." Mortification of spirit had no share in hastening his lamented end. He sunk, rather under the accumulated pressure of engagements upon a gradually-failing constitution, than by the force of any single event. The following account I have received from his friends:—

"Important engagements called our lamented friend from home the last month, and fully occupied his time and attention. Before he returned home he had but little sleep for two nights; and on the day he set off on his journey to Bedford-square, he experienced a considerable degree of feebleness while travelling, accompanied by much languor of spirits. On his reaching his residence on the 22d of June, a little after ten in the evening, he took a light supper and retired to bed, but had little rest. The following morning medical advice was obtained, and in the evening sedatives were administered; but the desired effect did not follow. Sir Henry Halford was then called in, and afterward Dr. Warren; and both of them continued their visits to him till within a few hours of his decease, which took place on Friday, June 30th, at seven o'clock in the evening, in the most tranquil manner.

"From the effects of the complaint with which it pleased Him who is infinite in wisdom to visit our beloved friend, he experienced from the first a great prostration of physical and mental strength, which rendered him incapable of expressing with accuracy the feelings of his mind, except in a few occasional intervals. In one of those moments of recollection, he spoke of the difference of 'knowing the great truths of the Gospel in the spirit, and in the letter only.' In another, he adverted to the subjects of death and eternity, and repeated the passage from St. Peter, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' And when a friend was reading to him, very slowly, some of the first verses of Psalm ciii, he took up many of the words with much interest, and repeated, with considerable feeling, 'Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy.' To his coachman, whose attentions to his dying master were unwearied, he said, 'O, William, what is all the world to a man, unless he has an interest in Christ? What are its grandeur and honours? I have passed through all; and they are all nothing, and worse than nothing, if, with them, we have not God to rest upon!" —'I renounce all for Christ!'"

The following extract of a letter from a respectable gentleman at Dover, written on receiving the news of Mr. Butterworth's death, you will hear with interest:—

"It would be impossible to describe to you the painful feelings of

sorrow and regret which your letter, communicating the decease of our highly-esteemed and excellent friend, occasioned, and were it not from a full persuasion that our loss is his eternal gain, the thought of his being now no more would quite overwhelm us. But why do I say no more, when he is enjoying a fulness of felicity with that Saviour whose cause he so ardently loved, and whose example he followed while on earth, and to promote whose glory, and to exercise good will to men, seemed to be the chief objects for which he wished to live? May we imitate his bright example, and then we shall assuredly 'go to him,' though 'he will not return to us!'

"Our friends, and very many of his late opponents, (whom he conciliated by his truly Christian conduct previous to his departure,) are testifying all the respect they possibly can to his memory; and if you will favour me with a few lines, informing me of the day and hour of interment, as soon as it is fixed, I shall feel obliged; as all those to whom I have alluded wish wholly to close their houses at that time, and to have the bells of the parish church muffled and tolled on the truly melancholy occasion.

"As a member of parliament our excellent friend stood in the highest rank, combining, as he did, the great qualities of genuine independence with true Christian principles. Indeed, I never expect to see his like again."

The marks of respect, mentioned in this letter as intentional, were paid on the day of the funeral; and the colours of the government packets, and other vessels in the harbour were hoisted half-mast high.

And now I dismiss you. His immediate relatives would have been present with us, but for indisposition; and I might then have felt bound to address a few words of solace and counsel to them. To you, my Christian friends, I only say, Remember the vanity and frailty of life, and prepare also to die. The end of the good man is peace; but the expectation of the wicked shall be cut off. Let not the effects of this mournful occasion evaporate in unprofitable regrets, and be wiped away with your tears. Our brother "is not dead, but sleepeth;" he is at rest with God. Aspire you to the same blessedness; follow in the same path of faith, humility, meekness, charity, diligence, and patient enduring to the end. So to you, also, shall the summons be without dread; and no bitter, hopeless tear shall fall upon your grave. The hand which was stretched upon the cross has expanded before us the bright and attractive scenes of a better state. There the righteous dead are in joy and felicity with him. Their number swells; one happy and triumphant spirit after another is removed into the heavenly family; they wait for you; a parent, or a brother, or a friend waits for you; disappoint them not; put in your claim anew this day, through the merits of your Saviour, for this heavenly inheritance; lay aside every weight; walk as citizens of heaven; and hasten on your course, nor tarry in all the plain, nor look behind you, till you enter that city of God, where death cannot follow you, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away.

SERMON VII.—*Qualifications for the Christian Ministry.*

Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. John Bell, Jonathan Crowther, and others, at the Conference of Wesleyan Methodist Ministers, held in Manchester, August, 1827.

MY BRETHREN,—It is with unaffected diffidence that I appear before you on this solemn occasion, to offer to you advices and observations upon that sacred office to which you were yesterday set apart. I am conscious of great unfitness for this task. I know with what superior wisdom, with how much greater impressiveness you might have been reminded of the import and extent of those obligations which you have taken upon you, by many who now surround me: but, since this service, anxious as the performance of it is to my own mind, has devolved upon me officially, I address myself to it in dependence upon that help which our common Master has graciously promised to his servants, in all those departments of duty to which they may be called in his name, and by his Church. I am encouraged also to rely upon your humility to receive with "readiness of mind" what I may be enabled to offer to your consideration, so far as you find it sanctioned and confirmed by the pure word of God.

The words on which I propose to ground the remarks and counsels which I am appointed to address to you, are those of St. Paul to Timothy, "his own son in the Gospel," in his second epistle to that distinguished evangelist:—

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

These words, in a large interpretation, may be considered as describing the religious state of every true Christian. In their primary and proper sense, however, they describe the endowments of the Christian minister. Of this you will see sufficient proof, by merely connecting them with the context: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God." Such, then, is the necessary furniture of him who serves the sanctuary under the evangelic dispensation; such the preparation he must receive from Heaven, and under the influence of which he must live, if he would "make full proof of his ministry:" for of himself and of the primitive preachers of the Gospel, in their special character as "ministers of the New Testament," the apostle speaks. The terms used to express these qualifications are, indeed, of deep and comprehensive import; but whatever they imply, however rich and rare the qualities which they exhibit, whether taken separately or in combination, it is your hope and comfort that they are spoken of as the "gift" of God; he is the source of them; and because they are his "gift," they are, by that very circumstance, rendered attainable by you, if you ask them in the earnestness of that spirit of prayer which is animated by desire and rendered prevalent by faith.

To these endowments I call your attention, in the order of the words to which I have referred.

I. The first is courage. "God hath not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power," of virtue, of courage, as opposed to timidity and cowardice; from which we learn, that courage, such courage only as is inspired by God into the hearts of his servants, is an essential element in the character of a minister of Christ; an essential qualification for the due and full discharge of the duties of his vocation. A few remarks may serve to impress this consideration upon your minds.

1. The true and faithful minister of Christ, in whatever Church he may be found, and in whatever station he may be placed, must, so long as there is a "world which lieth in wickedness," bear the reproach of that world. It is a moral fact, which might well surprise a person unacquainted with human nature, and which would, indeed, greatly perplex an advocate of the doctrine of the natural innocence of man to account for,—that nothing but such courage as only the inspiration of Heaven can supply should be a necessary qualification for those who preach the Gospel of our Saviour. The world needs religious truth; it has often confessed that it needs it; it is their office to bring it bright and unclouded from the Source of light himself. They come forth also as the messengers of mercy, the heralds of peace, the "ministers of reconciliation" between God and man; yet fact has proved that the world has no heart for the heavenly intelligence they bring; that if the objects of their ministry make any progress, it is in opposition to apathy and contempt, to enmity, and often to persecution; and that circumstances are continually occurring in which courage is not less necessary to them, than to those who encounter the storms of the ocean, and the struggles of battle. What can more certainly demonstrate that "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and that "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil?" Of this enmity and contempt every part of the world to which the Gospel has come has exhibited instances; and every minister of Christ has been the object of them. The inspiration of apostles was no protection from the expression of this feeling. When St. Paul preached at Athens, those who spent their time in hearing and telling some new thing could not hear this new thing with patience or courtesy; and the accents of heavenly wisdom, even from his lips, were pronounced "babbling." Neither learning nor eloquence, any more than plainness and simplicity, has disarmed this hostility; and wherever the religion of Christ is nominally received, the case is only circumstantially altered. One external form of religion does not differ so much from another, as that Scriptural and vital Christianity which you must teach, from that theory of the doctrine of Christ which is received by "men of the world." If you teach the repentance of a broken heart, the faith which excludes self righteousness, the comforting and renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, the life and walk of faith and love, the completeness and perfection of our subjection to the law of Christ in all inward and outward holiness, you cannot escape the imputation of fanaticism. The light you kindle will be an offensive glare, and your zeal will be obtrusive and irritating. All other professions and vocations have their degrees of credit and honour,—yours has none, but among those over whose hearts and consciences God may make

your word victorious. I warn you of this, that you may not "marvel if the world hate you." I warn you of it, that you may feel that it is a case which cannot be altered; and that so you may never indulge in experiments to gain credit among worldly men. The friendship of the world cannot be attained by the faithful minister of Christ, except by treacherous compromises of truth and duty; at which you, we trust, will always shudder. Ask of God then the Spirit "of power," that you may never be "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Be "all things" innocently "to all men, that you may gain some." "Give no offence to Jew or Gentile;" but as to the burden of contempt which you must bear for the sake of Christ your Master, and for his reproving doctrine, say with courage, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

2. This spirit will sometimes be called into trial by occurrences in the Church, as well as by the settled enmity and hostility of the world.

It is your felicity to be now introduced into the ministry of God's word among a people who will generally regard you with confidence and affection, just in proportion as you faithfully teach and enforce "the truth which is according to godliness;" and firmly uphold that holy system of discipline with which you are also entrusted: the greater, therefore, would be your guilt, the more unpalliated your offence, were you to betray them in either. But it must not be disguised, that the purest Churches have their unsanctified members, and that in others, not entirely without gracious influence, there are constant tendencies to an earthly temper, to party spirit, to self will, and to violations of Christian order. Let it then be remembered, that in the faithful discharge of the ministry now confided to you, you must often be the messengers of unwelcome tidings; of admonitions which will rouse the pride, and of reproofs which will awaken the slumbering enmity of a lukewarm mind. If you therefore anticipate a constantly calm and unruffled course, your disappointment will be the more poignant, and will place your consciences in circumstances of hazard, in proportion as you are not prepared for it. Will the earthly-minded professor of a heavenly religion hear you urge it upon him from time to time, "in season and out of season," that he "be not conformed to this world?" Will the man who evaporates the spirit of a religion which is not "in word only, but in power," into cold and inefficient compliances with the forms of duty, hear you challenge him with "drawing near to God with his lips, while his heart is far from him?" Will he who talks of being "led by the Spirit," but brings forth no fruits of the Spirit, no meekness, lowliness, and charity, hear from you that he is still "in the flesh," whatever his profession of faith or feeling may be, and that he "cannot therefore please God?" Will the whited wall or painted sepulchre see all its inward corruption disclosed by your searching investigations, and all its gaudy and deceptive decoration placed in disgusting contrast to the pollutions within? Finally; will those whose obedience to the morality of the Gospel is lax and unsteady hear you "reason on righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come," on the obligations of charity, peaceableness, loyalty, the social and the relative duties? and yet, in any of these cases, will those who are convinced, but who, as it often happens, still remain uncorrected,

love you for your fidelity? or think that the hand which presses so hard upon their consciences is the hand of kindness? No man who is resolved to live in his sins ever yet loved the minister by whom that particular sin or habit to which he is addicted is disturbed. It was not to give us a view of individual character that a king of Israel is introduced, exclaiming at the sight of a prophet, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!" What is Ahab to us, but as Ahab's heart is the picture of every heart, which, under the influence of its corrupt passions, strives against truth and conviction, against God and his messengers? You will prove that this is no insulated and individual case; an incident only in ancient history; or which can occur only in some age of extreme corruption, or in the life of some individual of desperate character. The mirror is here held up to our fallen nature, and the secret breathing of many a heart, if not the express language of proud and contemptuous lips, will be, as to you, in the earnest, pointed, and restless fidelity of your administration of the holy doctrine of Christ, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

The same may be said of Christian discipline. There are circumstances in which you will no more maintain the discipline of Christ without offence, than you will be able to publish and enforce his doctrine. The discipline of most Churches was framed, at least in its leading and characteristic parts, in the days of their simplicity; in their first love; when their respect to the authority of Scripture was most implicit; when the spiritual ends of their union and fellowship were most clearly apprehended; and when this great principle was best understood and most faithfully acted upon, that to bring the world into the Church in any other mode than by a true conversion of men from its temper and practice, were only to convert the Church into the world, to break down the "hedges thereof," and to make the narrow way wide and fatal as the gate of death. So long therefore as this spirit continues to actuate any religious society, its discipline will be maintained with ease, and the most cautious and zealous of its ministers will command most of its respect and confidence. But the worldly spirit is opposed to these restraints, and sighs for greater latitude.—Just as this may prevail in the temper of individuals, or in separate portions of a religious society, the inclination will discover itself to "remove the ancient land-marks;" the bearing then will be against the barrier which distinguishes the Church from the world; or, as a factious and obtrusive spirit may arise, against the different branches of godly order and pastoral authority. It is here, I foretell to you, that your courage will be often and painfully put to the test; and happy for you, if you obtain grace to be undeviatingly faithful. But, that you may be clothed with the armour of righteousness both "on the right hand and on the left," I also remind you, that this courage is godly courage; a temper of mind which the words before us declare to be "the gift" of God; a grace therefore from heaven, which will always be known by its celestial stamp and character. It is not self will; not the offspring of pride, or of prejudice; "the Spirit of power" comes from the same source as "the Spirit of meekness" and gentleness; it is attained by the same fervency of prayer; it is nurtured by the same fellowship with God; nor can it exist independent of the continual influence of the "God of all grace." As to doctrine, it will teach you

to "speak the truth in love;" and as to discipline, if your courage be a fruit of the Spirit, it will be wise, careful, and undisturbed by boisterous and headlong passions: and when your brethren shall put into your hands the rod and the crook of those superior pastorships to which in course of service you will attain, if this endowment be yours, the arm with which you wield them will be all animate with charity and tenderness, and subject, in all its movements, to the control of a discreet mind, and the direction of a pure intention.

3. The "courage" which is here made one of the leading qualifications of the minister of Christ will be called into exercise by the difficulties and dangers incident to his office, and which are always, in some degree, inseparable from it.

When St. Paul, writing to Timothy, would express, by a figure of speech, the nature of the service into which he had entered, he brings not his illustration from the peacefulness and quiet of civil life, but from the military profession; and bids him "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Thus he supposes labours and dangers, yes, and the possible sacrifice of life also, as involved in the service of "an evangelist;" and a courage sufficient to meet all these, as one of his indispensable qualifications. Nor would a soldier unprepared for marches, watchings, toils, and hazards be a greater anomaly than a minister of Christ who should look for an entire exemption from them. Difficulties and labours, I know that you, my brethren, must have; for it is in the very nature of our toilsome and busy itinerancy to lay them upon you. Sacrifices of health and of life, I trust, you may not be called to make; and we all pray, that, instead of "the residue of your days being cut off," as in the case of several we have had lately to deplore, you may long live to preach that truth the vitality of which you have experienced, and long keep your rank as "the ministers of God for good" to that society into which you have been called. But we know not what may be in reserve for you, nor to what dangers, either at home or abroad, our extended work may expose you. It is my duty, therefore, to fix the principle of the apostle firmly in your minds, that it may support the spirit of self sacrifice in all its length and breadth, however you may be called to exercise it. That principle is, that even health and life are among the offerings which you have laid upon the altar in your solemn vows on this occasion, and consecrated to your Saviour. As the soldier gives up these to his sovereign, so, as to you, they are no longer yours, but Christ's. True, the soldier may legally and loyally take care of both, provided he does so consistently with his duty; but his only rule is, "to please him who hath called him to be a soldier;" to do the will of his sovereign, not his own. Such is your state of separation and devotedness to another Lord. You are his in a sense eminent and peculiar; and your surrender of yourselves to him must be absolute in body, soul, and spirit. You may be called, as your fathers were, to meet mobs of base and brutal men, in carrying into some rude and neglected districts of your own country the light of the Gospel of your Saviour. Of their holy "courage" you are this day the fruits. You owe to it your own souls; and you will not therefore shrink from the milder struggle which still remains in many places to be accomplished, nor cowardly turn from a track of service marked so strongly with the recent footsteps of these

heroic examples. You may be called, in the course of your ministry, to brave the risk of contagion and fever, in visiting and comforting the afflicted members of your charge; and in such cases you will remember that "the vows of your God are upon you." You may also have reason to apprehend that the activity of your exertions may shorten life; but if you are clear in your call of duty, wo to you if you "do the work of the Lord negligently." How often, in such cases, have those words of our Lord been, even in this world, accomplished: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it!" You may be called, as, indeed, some of you have already been called, to launch forth upon the mighty deep; and, in insalubrious climates, and amidst the dangers incident to foreign travel and residence, and among a barbarous people, to preach the Gospel of Christ. You who have so nobly answered to this call already, and who, young as some of you are, stand before us this day as men who have cheerfully "hazarded your lives for the Lord Jesus," are the delightful pledge to us, that the same courage will not be wanting to any of you, should the same hand beckon you to similar fields of danger; that, in the assurance of a faith which recognizes the issues of life and death as placed far above the control of chance and earthly accidents, and rejoicing to know that He who holds "the stars," "the angels" of his Churches, "in his right hand," will never suffer their light to be quenched in the shades of death by any lower behest than his own, you will say, "Here am I, send me." Some of you may even be martyrs for your Saviour and for his truth. Why should I not put this also among the possibilities which lie before you? The Church, so long as she extends her efforts into conquered heathen countries, united to our own by colonial relations, employs her messengers, and preaches her doctrine, under the shelter of that protection which a liberal and tolerant government throws around all its subjects; but these are not the boundaries of her zeal, and beyond them she is now despatching, in different directions, her apostles and evangelists to brave the persecuting wrath of pagan and Mohammedan powers, the enthroned guardians of the "darkness of this world." My brethren, should any of you, in those uncertain travels to which your charity for the souls of men may impel you, be called to lay down your lives as witnesses of His truth, who laid down his life for you, can we admit the thought that you would shrink and betray the ark and the covenant of your God? Certainly not, if you are endowed with this gift of God, this "spirit of power," of which the apostle here speaks. Had there been nothing in man but what is of man, the Church would never have had its confessors unto death; but if the spirit of martyrdom be of God, the Church shall never want its witnesses, when the case demands the sacrifice, to the end of time. Such was the lofty spirit of courage with which God endowed the apostles and evangelists of primitive times; and with that same spirit, in answer to your fervent prayers, he will endow you;—a courage equal to every occasion, rising with every difficulty, and which, beating in your hearts of zeal and charity, will repeat, through every moment of your future life, the vows you now make in his presence, and lead you to consecrate all you are, and all you can do or suffer, to his blessed and beloved service.

II. The second of the endowments of the Christian minister mentioned in the text is the spirit of love.

Here also, my brethren, I must remind you, that this, as well as the spirit of power, is "the gift of God:" that charity which is to qualify you for your work, if you are ever evangelically prepared for it; that mighty principle which is to glow in your hearts, and animate and effectuate all your services, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Were you directed to seek it from man, from education, from emulation, from personal culture, you might despair of attaining it; but it is one of the "good and perfect gifts" which are "from above:" it has a fulness, therefore, into which your most enlarged affections may expand; it is a "grace" in which you may always "grow."

That this love is not mere susceptibility of natural temperament, not the benevolence of education and imitation, (though both have their effect in softening the harshness of natural temper,) may appear from the very character we have already described; for of this character love is also made an attribute. What character is this? It is one, not only insensible to reproach, but which glories in it; it is not only unyielding to the whole world, but is ceaselessly aggressive upon it; one which thinks no labour hard; which shrinks from no suffering; which can make no compromise; which can respect no form or mode uncongenial to the spirit of the Gospel; which can hide no truth, however offensive; which death, in its most terrific forms, cannot turn from its steady and bent purpose. In viewing this array of the sterner virtues, we seem to see rising before us one of the ancient prophets reproving the kings, and defying the nobles, of apostatizing Judah; or that "same John who had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins," seeking the solitudes of the desert, and only issuing from them with awful accents to warn men "to flee from the wrath to come." But we mistake: these were not the prototypes of the Christian minister; for in him must meet also the meekness and "gentleness of Christ." The union of qualities so opposite shows that both are of God; for if the unbending firmness and rigour of this character were of nature, the softness, the tenderness of this "love" could not co-exist with it; nature never formed such a combination: it is from the hand of God, in whose work strange extremes often meet and harmonize. We see it here,—the charity softens the sternness of the courage, and is itself upheld and corroborated by the force of unyielding principle, and the deep and uneradicable sense of duty.

We may infer the celestial inspiration of this warm and inciting charity also from the circumstance, that it is held forth as an essential qualification of all ministers without exception. Into that office God calls men of every variety of natural temperament; the cold, the apathetic, and the rugged, as well as the bland, and mild, and pitiful, by original constitution. Yet here no exception is made, either as to the principle, or the measure of it; "for God hath not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love." It is "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us:" it kindles, therefore, coldness itself into ardour, and transforms the affections of even a rude nature, as fire transmutes the most rigid elements into its own expansive, elastic, vivid substance. We see an example in St. Paul himself. Was he a man constitutionally mild, compassionate, benevolent? He was the

reverse of each. What he was by nature, his own acts declare: his heart yielded to no relentings; his eye was tearless. He was an obdurate and merciless bigot, who could hale "men and women" to prison and to death; who, to use the fearfully-descriptive language of St. Luke, "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." How truly, then, did he say, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" when he could "weep with those that weep;" when, with boundless benevolence, he panted to fill the whole world with the sound of his Saviour's name, and rejoiced to "endure all things for the elect's sake, that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory!"

When this apostle says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;" he opens to us the mystery of this work of God in the heart; this secret spring of the tenderness, the ardour, the long suffering, of the evangelical ministry. By "the love of Christ," he may mean, in the lowest sense, love to Christ in return for his boundless love to us. We have known the terror of the Lord in our own awakenings; and, having felt the power of that love which rescued us from "so great a death" as that which we feared, and to which we felt ourselves to be justly liable, we are anxious to spread his name, to proclaim his honours, and to bring a reconciled world to submit to his dominion, and to augment the revenue of his praise. Or by "the love of Christ" may be meant a love emulous of His who came into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost;" a love excited and inflamed by those views of the extremity of man's condition which the circumstance that he was so loved by Christ unfolds. "We thus judge, that if one died for all," if the Son of God himself were incarnated, that he might shed his own most precious blood as the price of man's redemption and rescue, "then were all dead;" and, impressed with these solemn views of the evil of sin, and of that extreme danger which such love on the part of Christ implies, the appeal to our hearts becomes irresistible; for the case is one of life or death, of salvation or an eternal exclusion from God.—Both these senses of the phrase imply a state and exercise of the affections which can result only from supernatural influence; for through this only can we show a generous gratitude to Christ, by caring for his glory; or so realize the depths of that danger to which men who are "dead" are exposed, as to feel thus painfully and restlessly concerned for their salvation. But the full interpretation of the passage includes another idea. "The love of Christ constraineth us;" the same principle of active, pitying charity is imparted from him to us, by virtue of our vital union with him; a stream gushing from and fed by that exhaustless fountain; a tide setting in from the ocean of his infinite love, and "bearing us away" to the duties of our office. It is thus that we reach the origin of that affection which the apostle here joins with "courage," and exhibits as an essential qualification of all who are inducted into this ministry by the authority of Heaven. It is from God, and from him through our faith, and that consequent fellowship with God which faith, always hanging upon God, supplies and establishes: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him" It is not nature; it is not sentimentality; it is the inspiration of celestial, heaven-born love, pure and vital from its own fountain, "the love of Christ:" the

same love that clothed Deity with flesh, made him a sufferer, bowed his head upon a cross, and then exalted him to be at once a "faithful" and a "compassionate" High Priest and Intercessor for the Church and for the world.

Such is the source from which you must derive this principle; and that you may neither mistake some counterfeit feeling for one which is to you so essential, that without it, though you could "speak with the tongues of men and of angels, you would become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," mark the nature and range of its hallowed and beneficent operation.

It is disinterested. Inspired by this love, you will be able in truth to say to all to whom you minister, "We seek not yours, but you;" not your favours, not your praise; but you yourselves, your souls, and the security of their immortal interests. We can aim at nothing more; we can be satisfied with nothing less: and all beside, whether kindness, friendship, or honour, is to us less than nothing and vanity.

It is without partiality. The priests of false religion in all ages have either created or recognized distinctions among men, inconsistent, not only with charity, but with humanity and justice; and have thus fostered those passions in the human heart, pride on the one part, and an envious enmity on the other, which it is the office of true religion to destroy. In proportion as Christianity has been corrupted, this repulsive and unhallowed character of paganism has always made itself in the same degree conspicuous; and the equal aspect of its charity to the souls of men has been thus distorted. The Christian priest recognizes in civil life the distinction of ranks and orders of men: "Honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear," is one of the most explicit precepts of the religion he is appointed to teach to others, and to exemplify in his own spirit and conduct; but in the exercise of his solemn office, as "an ambassador for Christ," the spirit of universal "love" with which his heart is touched annihilates all the distinctions of this life, and views man, stripped of the circumstances of external distinction, whether splendid or sordid, only under his relations to God and eternity; wandering in a darkness which he is to disperse by instruction; asleep in a delusion which his warning voice must dissipate; needing a salvation of which he is to explain the nature, and lay down the terms; labouring under sorrows and griefs, of which he has the healing emollient; a pilgrim to the skies, whose steps he is appointed to guide. Be the full inspiration of this restless, undiscriminating charity yours! The first lesson taught by Christ to St. Peter, when he received his commission to open the gates of the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, was, that, to a Christian minister, no man is "common or unclean."—Whenever, then, you see a human soul, fix upon it as the proper subject of your anxious care, whatever may be the circumstances of that "outward man" in which it is appointed to pass its sojourn, and to undergo its probation upon earth. In the exercise of this your ministry, view man as man, the creature of your God, the care of his providence, bought by the agonies of your Saviour's passion, capable of his favour, cared for in heaven, and having his part in the constant intercession of the common Mediator. Let this "love of Christ constrain" you; "take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones;" follow the meanest of his sheep into the wilderness, "lay it on your shoulders, and bring

at home rejoicing." To win a soul is your noblest prize; and the greater number you win, the brighter and richer will be that "crown of rejoicing," which you will wear in the day of the Lord.

It is generous. It spurns a narrow bigotry. The Christian minister is required by the apostle to be a "lover of good men;" and names and differences not affecting the essence of Christianity cannot limit this injunction. It has been at once the shame and the injury of the Church of Christ, that it has been so little regarded. How far, after all the profession of a more generous liberality of late, this charity has advanced in influence, it is not for me to say: this only I would enjoin upon you, that you regard the cultivation of this spirit as a serious duty; that you guard your own hearts against every contrary sentiment; and that, in the language of one of your vows at your ordination yesterday, "you endeavour to maintain and set forward, as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people." That form of Christianity you profess may serve to enforce this upon you. One of the characters of genuine Wesleyan Methodism is, that it is abhorrent of the spirit of sectarianism. It meets all upon the common ground of "loving the Lord Jesus in sincerity;" its sole object is, to revive and extend Scriptural Christianity in all Churches, and in the world; it teaches us to place religion, not in forms or opinions only, but in a renewed nature, and especially in the Christian temper; and the writings of its venerable founder are, more than those of any modern divine, imbued with that warm and expansive affection, "the love of the brethren," which our Lord made the distinguishing mark of genuine discipleship. Others have dwelt upon this as a grace, he enforces it as a virtue; others have displayed it as an ornament of the Christian character, he has made it an essential of practical piety. He did this in an age when much less of the show, and perhaps much less of the spirit, of genuine liberality and kindness among persons of different opinions, existed than at the present. Be it yours, then, to take the full impress of his writings and example; to convert whatever there may be of the mere exhibition of this sacred affection in the present age into reality; to avoid the spurious affectation, and to cultivate the truth, of charity; to love all who love your Saviour, "not in word only, but in deed and in truth;" and to account all those as your brethren, whom God condescends to acknowledge as his children.

It is universal. It bounds not itself; it is the "love of Christ," which knows no limits but the race itself. It was this expansive spirit which carried the first preachers beyond the bounds of Judea, and which is now the spring of all those efforts that are extending the knowledge of Christ to the ends of the earth. This spirit, as to the first disciples, came down with the pentecostal fire, and then kindled a zeal to fulfil their Lord's commission, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;" which prepared them to bound over the pale of the Jewish Church, as soon as special calls by angelic visions, or the indication of significant circumstances, or broad and open opportunities, showed that the time of exertion was come, and pointed out its direction. It is perfectly gratuitous to suppose that the disciples, after their baptism by the Holy Spirit, were indifferent to this work of charity until they were driven out of Judea by persecution. The spirit was there; but in that age of special direction they waited for the signal

from heaven; and when it was given, the motto which a boundless pity for the world, springing from the love of God "shed abroad in their hearts," emblazoned on their sacred standards was, "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God." Such, my brethren, will be this heavenly affection in you; for though you may for the most part be appointed to fields of domestic labour, it will teach you that the work of encouraging and aiding all missionary efforts is no inconsiderable part of your public duty; you will lead up the charity and the liberality of the Church in this sacred cause; and you will be the patrons and friends of those whom she may send forth as her heralds to "prepare the way of the Lord" in the distant deserts of pagan and Mohammedan nations. No geographical boundary, no natural or artificial distinction, not the colour of the skin, no lowliness or bondage of condition, can stand before this "love." Mountains sink, rivers and seas dry up, colours fade away, and the clank of the chain of slavery sounds no note of degradation, before that one glorious declaration of the "love" which commissions, and the "love" which inspires you, if you have received this great "gift" of God,—"There is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

It is condescending. "It minds not high things, but condescends to men of low estate." It not only "suffers the little children to come unto Christ, and forbids them not," but delights to instruct them in his religion, to encourage early piety, and to place them "in his arms, that he may bless them." It is moved by the cry of poverty, and the call of sickness; and it hastens to relieve and comfort both; it "comes down like rain upon the mown grass, like showers that water the earth." It enters into every state, and sympathizes with every condition: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?"

It is careful. Care is the offspring of love; and the tenderness and patience of its anxieties are in proportion to its own ardour. It was this which made "the care of the Churches daily" St. Paul's heaviest burden. If you know how to love your work, you will know how to care for it. The performance of a given course and quantum of duty will not then suffice. You will care for the success which may follow; for the preservation of the good which may dawn as the twilight, and shoot forth as the tender blade, easily obscured or quickly blighted.—You will care for the peace, purity, and growth of the societies committed to your charge, lest errors should mislead, or the spirit of the world wither them; lest any should "fail of the grace of God;" lest you should "run in vain, and labour in vain."

Lastly. It is unwearied. The ministry is not, as it is sometimes termed, "one of the professions;" which implies that it may be laid down or taken up at pleasure or convenience; or that, having been pursued in our more active years, we may in infirmity and age retire from its cares, and discharge ourselves from its obligations. It is not a profession, but a vocation; a vocation from heaven, which, if ever truly given, lays a "necessity upon you" that you "preach the Gospel." It is now, therefore, to be regarded as the business of your life, to which you are to devote yourselves to the exclusion of all other cares and studies. Infirmities, age, and the judgment of your brethren,

may limit or change the sphere in which you act; but if the spirit of your ministry continue with you, you will fill up the entire space which may be allotted you: while breath shall remain to minister in public or in private the word of reconciliation, this "love" which knows no age, and never dies, shall still attune your voice to the sweetest sound which human lips can pour into a human ear,—and never so sweet as when age and the authority of character enforce it,—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

III. The third ministerial endowment enumerated in the text is, "a sound mind." "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

The word is often rendered "a sober mind," or, "the spirit of sobriety;" but the sobriety meant is not that which controls the corporeal appetites, but that which regulates the mind; and it imports both a well-furnished and a well-arranged and balanced intellect; qualifying the minister of Christ to communicate instruction with clearness and judgment, and rendering him, as St. Paul elsewhere expresses it, "apt to teach." This also is spoken of in the words before us, as one of those special "gifts" of God by which he qualifies his servants for their holy office; and we are, therefore, not to understand by it, that natural intellectual fitness which, though found in all those whom God selects as his instruments, and is the basis of this special gift, does not, from being a mere natural quality, reach so high as that "gift" which you are taught in the text to expect from the grace of Christ: nor, enriched as your understandings will be by his blessing upon the exercise of your minds in study, and by "giving attendance to reading;" and strong as may be that stamp of sobriety which a strict and constant course of mental discipline may give to them,—will either of these comprehend fully that "soundness of mind" of which the text speaks. It includes both; and it is in such exercises, rightfully and prayerfully directed, that the higher degree of the gift is imparted; nor can it be attained independent of them, in ordinary circumstances. But the sobriety here intended is that enrichment of heavenly knowledge and discernment, that abounding "in all wisdom and prudence," which only they can receive and retain who live in intercourse with the Source of heavenly light, and "walk by faith in him." And if it be true of Christians generally, that "if any man lack wisdom," and "ask it of God," it shall be given to him "liberally," how great may be your confidence in asking this celestial gift, since you ask it to be employed in the service to which he has appointed you, and that you may be the unerring guides of the souls purchased by his blood, and placed under your care!

The characters of "a sound mind," as connected with the exercise of the Christian ministry, are too numerous for me to attempt to adduce in full; but the following may be sufficient to indicate to you its importance, and to call forth your prayers, that you may be endowed with it in a measure equal to that demand which may be made upon this qualification by the general or special duties of your future ministry.

1. Its first character is love of the truth.

The love of truth generally designates an intellectual man; it is this which gives vigour to his studies, acuteness to his researches, and patience to his labours: but to possess the "soundness of mind" here

spoken of, is to love "the truth," eminently so called, the doctrine of Christ, the truth of the Gospel.

To love its acquisition.

If you "meditate on these things, and give yourselves wholly unto them," you will not be content with partial glances of them, and with "first principles of the doctrine of Christ." You will feel that devout study only opens brighter views and richer mines; that while you teach you learn; and that by learning only can you keep up the vigour, the harmony, the "demonstration" of your teaching. Like Moses, you will be anxious to press upward to more distinct vision; you will feel the force of his sublime prayer, "Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Like him, too, you will obey the voice of condescending goodness, which says, "Come up unto me in the mount;" that when you descend among your people, the "face" of your ministry may be irradiated with those beams of light which only prayerful contemplation can put upon it; a glory not to be veiled like his, because you are ministers of "the New Testament," but which with "unveiled face" you are to exhibit to the people, who with "unveiled faces" also have the privilege of beholding it: so that both you and they, by this clear and vivid manifestation of the glory of God in Christ, in his person, work, and offices, in his doctrines, promises, and life, may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To love the truth, so as to be jealous of its uncorrupted purity.

A "sound judgment" will teach you that truth is exposed to danger; and a "sound feeling" will impel you the more carefully to guard it.—You are set for the defence as well as for the promulgation of the Gospel; and this is no inferior part of the trust committed to you by Christ. The sacred fire of the altar of the tabernacle was kindled by Heaven; but the priests were to burn wood upon it every morning, that it might never go out. Such is to be your daily charge of that heavenly doctrine which at "first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Love to the truth, and indifference to its purity, cannot possibly co-exist. The one necessarily implies the absence of the other; and one must subside, as the other rises in its influence upon your hearts. As you love it, you will watch over it, that it may never, at least in your hands, be darkened by errors, or adulterated by human speculations. You will fulfil, with fidelity, in your day, that guardian office which was fulfilled for you and for all the present generation, by that band of holy men which every age of the Church has produced; you will stand like them around its sacred fount, and defend its bright and hallowed stream from being troubled by the foot of bold and polluted intruders; that so it may continue to flow, as "the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." It is true that an opinion has often been asserted, and sometimes ingeniously defended, by speculative and able men, that mental error has no guilt, and brings no danger to the soul. But a "sound mind" will think differently, because a very different view of the case is given in the word of God; and from its intense love of the truth, it will feel differently. It will not allow these heavenly doctrines, these "sons of God," to ally themselves to "the daughters of men;" lest a giant progeny of errors should

again fill the earth with darkness and wickedness. It forbids that Isaac, "the seed in which all nations are to be blessed," should take to himself a wife of the people of the land, lest Canaanitish corruptions should again defile the Church of God, and destroy the hope and the refuge of man.

It is this love of the truth in ministers which guarantees its perpetuation to future times.

It is not to the present age only that even private Christians are to look, since Christians in former ages have cared for them. Much more is a minister bound by virtue of his office to have respect to the transmission of truth to posterity. We see how strikingly the Apostle Paul and his coadjutors connected God's mercy to them with the future generations of the world, as they looked down the whole line of the future, and comprehended all men in the plans of Heaven, and in their own charity;—"that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Jesus Christ." To the future you too, my brethren, will constantly have respect, if you love the truth, and the souls of men whom that truth only can "sanctify" and save. If "taking heed" to your own "doctrine" is necessary to this end, you will rigidly scrutinize it by the word of God, lest you should be the parents or the patrons of any injurious or destructive error. If the institutions of the Church are essential, you will preserve them unimpaired. If the continuance of the ministry is necessary, you will commit it "to faithful men," as we have now, we trust, committed it to you. If sowing the seed deep and wide may multiply the probabilities of its unfailing transmission, you will "sow beside all waters." If labours are demanded, you will not shrink from them; if sufferings, you will suffer rather than betray the ark of your God, and "quench the light of Israel." What spirit-stirring examples of this regard for the preservation and transmission of truth are emblazoned in the glorious history of the Church! Gladly, O ancient witnesses for our Christ, were ye bound, that "the word of God might not be bound!" Meekly did ye die, that the truth might live, and give life to the world!

2. This quality of a "sound mind" in a minister will show itself in the pre-eminence which he gives in his studies and in his preaching to that truth which he is appointed exclusively to teach.

We have the strongest example of this in the apostle himself. His education had furnished him with knowledge of various kinds; and incidental allusions in his writings show that he was familiar with the poets and the sages of ancient Greece: yet, when referring to his ministry among the polished Corinthians, a people ready to receive, with applause, any display of that "wisdom" for which their schools were famous, and in which the genius of their country was felt to have immortalized itself, he says, "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." All other knowledge was, as it were, annihilated in his cares, and his discourses; and he dwelt upon the doctrines of our redemption, as though he "knew nothing" beside. So judged this man of "sound mind;" and how well he judged, the fruits of his ministry are the lasting evidence.

He had, indeed a previous discipline of mind, qualifying him the better for his special work when he was called to it, and which was at length sanctified to his great office of preaching Christ. There is

evidence too, from his writings, that subordinately to this, he continued to acquaint himself with useful knowledge in general; so that from this declaration of the apostle, ignorance and sloth can find no justification. The minister would be justly condemned, and especially in the present day, who neglects the acquisition of knowledge; who does not, as St. Paul himself enjoins, "give attendance to reading;" who contents himself with half-conceived and ill-arranged generalities; who has no intellectual stores from which to make that skilful distribution, and give that varied illustration of his subjects, which the different characters, states, and tastes of men require; who, though professedly a teacher of religion, neither defends it by well chosen arguments, nor holds in his mind a just arrangement of its doctrines; and who, while in every public service he places himself before the people as an expounder of God's word, seems not aware of the diligent application to private study which that important office demands, nor avails himself of the labours of those eminent men who have devoted their learning and their spiritual discernment to elucidate the Holy Scriptures. You have not been so taught. The sentiments of our venerable founder are too well known on this subject that I should repeat them. He enjoins upon us that we spend at least five hours daily in private reading and study; and in the earlier periods, at least, of our ministry, busy and disconnected as it is, we shall find the application of this portion of our time not superfluous. But if neglect of the necessary means of qualifying ourselves for this sacred work is without palliation, still more pitiable is the case, when that heavenly wisdom which it is our office to convey, instead of converting what is useful in every other branch of knowledge into its own substance, and rejecting what cannot be so alimented by it, is displaced by the "wisdom of words," and by the irrelevant sciences of this world. Of many subjects it is proper for a minister to taste, on which he may not feed; for if he would retain the freshness and power of his ministry, the science of salvation, the word of God, and the work of God, must be the study of his life. Law is the study of the man who has charge of our rights; medicine, of him who is entrusted with our health; the word of God, of him who has charge of souls. He only has "a sound mind," he only is "apt to teach," who thus judges. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth;" rightly distributing it, as the master of a house to his family sitting around his board, among whom may be the young, the aged, the invalid, and others with peculiar constitutional appetencies. This "distribution" will be discriminating as to the various kinds of food; but all that he distributes must be, in reality, food; that which is adapted to nourish the body to strength and health. You, my brethren, are the masters of the feast, whenever you administer in holy things; but that which you are rightly and with discrimination to distribute, is "the word of truth," not "the doctrines of men." You are professedly feeders of souls to spiritual strength, and religious maturity; and you must never forget that the soul has no aliment for moral ends but the word of God. It has indeed been argued in a somewhat popular book on physico-theology, not long ago published, that the listlessness with which sermons are often attended, arises from their having in them so little to excite the attention; and, in the view of this author, they would

be greatly improved, and piety would become at once more rational and more ardent, if preachers would more largely study the various branches of intellectual and natural philosophy, and make them the frequent theme of their discourses. From this practice, it is believed, deeper interest would be produced in our hearers, and more powerful effects would result. This opinion may be more than doubted; it will not certainly bear the application of the rule of the apostle just mentioned; for there would be in this practice no "distribution of the word of truth," and no consequent feeding of souls. The abstract speculations of the metaphysician scarcely produce any unequivocal conviction of the judgment, and must fall, therefore, powerless upon the heart; and as to the works of God in the natural world, a very superficial knowledge of them is all that is necessary for purposes of devotion. David was not a philosopher, at least the astronomy of modern times was unknown to him; but all the reach of Newton's calculations could not have increased that impression of pious and humble adoration, which a popular glance of the starry heavens awakened in his prepared mind. He exclaims, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" But had this reflection been the result of research and calculation, the probability is that its tone would not have been so deep and hallowed; at least, we are sure that the mere absence of science was no bar to the piety of the feeling, and the full impress of the morality of the lesson. The purposes for which we go into the philosophic lecture room, and into the house of God, are so distinct, and call forth exercises of mind so different, that they cannot be brought together in a sermon without disturbing or neutralizing each other. Nor is it necessary to make the pulpit the vehicle of philosophy. All that is necessary for the body of the people to know on these subjects can be had more compendiously, and more effectually, by reading cheap and popular publications. Such discourses in the pulpit would tire by the tastelessness of mere generality; or they would displace what ought to be ever most eminent in the ministry, if, to avoid superficial topics, deep discussion and particularity of illustration were resorted to. Nor would this practice accord with the genius of religion. Science creeps, while religion expands the wing and soars. One passing pious thought, in a devotional moment, on the structure of a pebble, shall produce all the effects supposed by the writer I have alluded to, infinitely more rapidly and efficiently, than if in scientific adoration we bowed down before the stocks and stones of geological theories; and the bright sun which on some smiling Sabbath morn lights the steps of the worshipper to the house of his God, or the thunder which may roll at a distance while he is sitting in the solemn assembly before Him "whose voice it is," shall shed a sweet and joyous, or a solemn and adoring, influence upon the spirit, which would probably be wholly dissipated were the preacher to commence a demonstration to show that the sun must be at least ninety millions of miles distant from the earth; and to account for the thunder, by descanting on the principles of electricity. The praise of profound science is no more true praise to a minister whose vow compels him to "give himself wholly" to other subjects, than it is praise to him to be scholastically and artificially eloquent. Deep wells are

often dry; and there are "clouds," gay with all the hues of light, which contain "no water," and only mock the husbandman while they pass in brilliant career over his parched fields. I would not have you ignorant of the subjects just mentioned, or of any other that can be consecrated to usefulness, which is aided by variety of knowledge They will afford you many happy facilities of illustrating a truth which rises much higher than themselves; and they often supply the attractive adornings of genuine eloquence: but this, as to you at least, is their principal office. Your administrations must be pregnant with more vital qualities; they are to be "clouds of blessing." Genius may mould them into various forms, and taste may illuminate and vary them with "colours dipped in heaven;" but whatever ray you cast upon the fringes of the cloud, let the body and substance of it be charged with the concentrated vapours of the spring, tremulous to the impulse of every breeze, and impatient to pour the vital shower upon the thirsting earth.

3. A third character of soundness of mind is discrimination.

To "try things that differ," to assign to each its own place, and to consider it in its relation to other subjects, is one of the highest attainments of practical wisdom. We speak of it now with reference to the different parts of that truth which you are called by your office to teach.

It has already been remarked, that, as to truth in general, soundness of mind in a minister will show itself in that pre-eminence which he will give in his studies and in his teaching, to the doctrines of Christ as embodied in the Scriptures, in comparison of different branches of knowledge which he may be under various temptations too far to cultivate. But as, among the various kinds of truth, one is to fix the special attention of the minister of Christ; so, among the particular truths of which that is the species, one subject must always occupy the first place, and be kept in that relation, both in our private theological system, and in our public ministry. Need I say that this is the glorious subject of all truly evangelical preaching, "the cross of Christ?" It is this to which St. Paul so constantly recurs, and of which he makes his boast, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and the reason which he gives ought to be deeply impressive upon every minister who aims at practical and saving results, as the fruits of his labours. That only was considered by the apostle as "the life" of Christianity; that, the only source from which its moral efficacy was derived: for why did he glory in the cross of Christ? He himself answers, "By which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."

It is the discernment of the true place and eminence of this grand truth with respect to all others in Christianity, and of all others to this, in a variety of degrees and relations, of which I now speak, and which will be the true test of the soundness of your minds in what relates to doctrine, and its application to the experience and salvation of men. The term, "analogy of faith," has been objected to, and has doubtless been abused to the culpable purpose of warping the pure word of God to the peculiarities of systems. Yet, in a sober acceptance of the phrase, there is doubtless an analogy of faith, which can never be safely overlooked; in other words, there are certain doctrines laid down in

the New Testament with peculiar strength of evidence; and by them all others on which any obscurity rests, considered in themselves, are to be judged of, and with the former the latter are to be harmonized. Among the brightest of these clearly-manifested truths is the doctrine of the cross, the atonement made for the sins of men by the sacrificial death of our Saviour. This is the key stone of the sublime arch of that theology which comprehends all our interests within its mighty range, and bears all their weight: it is at once the foundation and the corner stone of the temple of the universal Church, out of which there is no sacrifice, and no acceptance. What, then, is so leading and essential in the system we receive ought to be so in our preaching; and, forgetting this, our theology would be without power, and our "preaching vain." Up to this key stone, too, every part must be fitting in its order; and upon this foundation the whole building must be laid, or we discriminate not the differences, conjunctions, and harmonies of the beauteous whole. For suffer me to take the liberty of reminding you, that a man may preach nothing but the Gospel, and yet not be a preacher of the Gospel. Every part of the arch may be found in his teaching; but, not being fitted to the key stone, there is not the arch itself. The temple, too, may be there, its walls, its roof, its ornaments; but if separate and disjointed, all is isolated truth and detached beauty; the walls are not on the foundation, the house is not "builded together," and can never "grow unto a holy temple to the Lord;" under its roof no one finds shelter, before its altar no fragrant incense arises, and it is not a "palace in which God is known as a refuge." The discriminating quality of a "sound mind" will teach you, my brethren, to avoid these errors, so fatal to ministerial success, and will make you of "quick understanding," to discern at once the eminence of the doctrine of "Christ crucified," and the manner in which all others are related to it. But permit me more particularly to illustrate.

You seek a noble subject of preaching, and you therefore select the Divine perfections; and great and inspiring, we admit, is the display which is made of those "deep things of God" in the inspired records. He himself descends before us, and proclaims his own name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth." You dwell on these attributes; you find metaphysical proofs of their real existence in the Divine nature, and you select illustrations from nature and from providence to render them clearly understood. But a theist or Socinian could do all this as fully, as eloquently, as yourselves. You describe, you paint; but what do you more? What interest have your hearers in all this? You describe God; but what is to connect man, sinful man, with this Being of awful majesty and affecting condescension; since, after all, you cannot hide it, that "he will by no means clear the guilty." You teach nothing but what is true; but you do not teach the true knowledge of God. Go, then, unite the Old Testament with the New; exhibit that "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" God glorified in Christ; glorified by his passion, and glorifying himself in the administration of that salvation which flows from it; and then, and not till then, you teach the Divine perfections, and communicate the true knowledge of God to your people.

You intend to abase your hearers, to make them feel the depth of

their nature's fall, and to expose the hidden corruption and obscure mazes of a deceitful heart. This is a painful, but a necessary duty; for we are all apt to palliate and to heal over "our hurt" slightly. But what do you effect by this exposure of the heart? by all these reproving and repulsive exhibitions of the moral features of unregenerate man to himself in the true and unflattering mirror of the perfect law; if you treat this as an isolated subject, and think it sufficient to prove the fact, to thunder forth reproofs, or to give but general and obscure hints at the remedy? But connect the fall of man with the redeeming pity of his Saviour; with the blood which at once atones and sanctifies; with the power and immediate presence of a physician whose touch is health, and who requires no condition of access to himself but a pleading confidence in his power and compassion; and you strike hope into the heart, pained by your searching reproofs; and with hope enters contrition. No man thoroughly hates his sins, until he sees the fountain in which they may be washed away; for "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" is only manifested by the "preciousness" of that blood which it was needful to shed, in order to cleanse so deep and foul a stain. No evil is cured in its root and principle by reproof, by expostulation, by the keenness of ridicule, the cautery of satire, or even by the pleadings of sympathy and kindness. All these means have been tried in vain; and whatever impression may have been made upon the external manifestations of the unrenewed affections of the heart, the tide of corruption has still held on its course, deep and feculent within. There is no death for sin, but on the cross which bore the great Deliverer; and your orthodoxy on the subject of human depravity will serve your ministry nothing, unless you both "know" yourselves, and teach this all-important knowledge to others. "Knowing this," says St. Paul, with great emphasis, "that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

You would also perhaps teach the moral duties, another part of your ministry, which you cannot without unfaithfulness neglect; and I trust you have not to learn, that, in order to qualify yourselves to teach morals, you have no need to stray into the precincts of heathenism, or to resort to the discourses of those professed Christian divines who on such subjects have thought it the perfection of their skill to appear as much pagan and as little Christian as possible. You will find the Gospel to be complete, both as a system of morals, and as a system of doctrine. On each we equally needed a revelation, and on each has the unclouded light fallen from heaven. But although you present the full and perfect moral code of our religion in all its beauty, or in all its awfulness of obligation, yet, if you separate it from the hopes conveyed to the heart by the atonement and mediation of Christ, and from the vitality which each imparts through the instrumentality of faith; you only describe and paint, but you do not apply; or, if you apply, you reprove, you convince, you irritate, you induce "the spirit of bondage unto fear;" and here your ministry terminates. You train the branches of your vine, you apply the pruning knife, and you wait for fruit, and are disappointed. Or you form your representations of ideal virtue; mould an image of clay, give to it all the proportions and apparent muscular strength of man; but you bring it not into living

warmth and energy. See the grand mistake so often made, and avoid it. Teach the doctrine of the Spirit's renewing influence; that Spirit purchased by the passion of Christ for all that believe on him, and you offer at once the rule of duty, and the power of performing it. Your vine has been fruitless, not because its branches were not well trained and pruned; (you may have done both in the most anxious manner;) but because its root has been left out of the earth, or it has not been watered. Your statue of clay, after all your skill and toil, remains cold and motionless. But when you bring this fire from heaven, it warms under the plastic hand of your ministry; you place within it a heart instinct with a new and celestial life, which converts the gross material into its own nature, gives brightness to the eye, vigour to the limb, and one uniform and healthful action to the whole mass of death. You become the formers of living men, the examples of the obedience you teach; men who, to your joy, realize in their spirit and conduct the varied virtues on which otherwise you had descanted in vain. These I give as instances. You will be able to apply the principle more largely, and discern, that as all things in heaven and in earth are united in Christ, so every doctrine, promise, and precept in the Gospel centres in his cross, his glorious atonement, which is "the head," and by which all the rest "consist."

4. A "sound," well-prepared "mind" will find an important office in the application of truth.

The truth attained, and distinguished into the relation and proportion of its parts, becomes the instrument which we are to apply to effect the instruction and salvation of men; but the mode of using it is so intimately connected with these ends, that he who thinks of the infinite consequence of the work he is appointed to accomplish, will not fail to ask of God that hallowed skill which may insure his success.

Two things are indeed to be admitted: First, that the truth which directly connects itself with the salvation of man, is exceedingly plain and manifest, and may be comprehended in few propositions: Second, that every minister has his own particular gift in which he will chiefly excel, since by that gift God intends to use him to edify his Church. Yet neither are these plain and saving truths, nor this particular gift, whatever it be, so bound and fettered as not to be capable of being presented and used in a variety of applications, which are but the different ways of working the same powerful instrument. You will allow me then to instance a few of the most common modes of preaching, in order to point out that discretion and control which a "sound mind" will exercise with respect to each.

There is the declaration of the "first principles of the doctrines of Christ," which all men must be taught; which must enter, in some degree, and that efficiently, into every sermon, and be the basis of every address you make to men on the subject of their salvation. A sound mind will dictate that these leading truths should always be taught with appropriate simplicity and plainness; and that, on account of their being "first principles," and, therefore, first in importance, they should be expressed in terms chiefly taken from the inspired writings themselves; in "words which the Holy Ghost has taught;" as becoming their own majesty, which, like the sun, disdains to be painted in human colours. But the same sobriety of judgment will

also suggest, that as these first principles do not stand alone in the word of God, they are to be connected with particular applications in their fruits and effects, to the heart and life, and enforced by all possible variety of Scriptural motives. There is no such want of connection between the lowest principles and the highest attainments in religion, as some would seem to suppose. On the contrary, one is constantly dependent upon the other; and when St. Paul exhorts us to "leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on to perfection;" he means no more than that they should be left, as a builder leaves the foundation he has laid, to carry up the structure to its full height, which still remains in constant relation to the foundation, and is supported by it. It is for you then, in cultivating the greatest plainness and simplicity of preaching, still to remember the connection of the first truths you teach with every other, and to bring the whole system of Christian experience and Christian duty into your ministrations; so that if no ministry of a different character from your own existed, all who hear you might be made "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

There is the doctrinal and controversial mode of preaching. This also is an important branch of the ministry, which circumstances may often call for. The apostles afford us examples of this, as well as of the former. When St. Paul preached to the wise but idolatrous Greeks at Athens, he exhibited the mere elements of our religion, the being of a God, repentance, the resurrection of Christ and of men, and a future judgment. But when he preached in the synagogues, he "reasoned out of the Scriptures," and he "disputed in the school of Tyrannus." Every part of that truth "which is according to godliness" must be exhibited and explained in its time and order; and as errors or misapprehensions of truth arise and prevail in society, they call for refutation "in the spirit of meekness." But here the endowments of discretion and sobriety will be called into exercise. In the interpretation of doctrine, you will not fall into the error of assuming that there are no mysteries left unexplained by the Scriptures; no difficulties which are not superable by human investigation. You will rather humbly feel yourselves, and teach others, that much is left for the exercise of faith, and for the test of our docility and submission; and that clear as many of the doctrines of Scripture are, considered simply in their enunciation, yet their evidence to the reason of man is often but very partially vouchsafed, or wholly hidden within the folds of a veil, the lifting up of which is reserved to eternity. You will see also the folly of attempting to explain a truth made sufficiently clear, till there is some danger of producing doubt instead of stronger conviction; and of a perpetual propensity to argument and demonstration, as though men were "ever to learn without coming to the knowledge of the truth;" and of keeping up an incessant fight with objections, as though the victory had never been won. Above all, you will regard doctrinal accuracy, not as the substance, but as the mere instrument of salvation; the means of accomplishing the great end of your ministry, not the end itself. Our old divines well understood this, and distributed their discourses into "doctrines" and "uses;" and though the formality of their divisions accords not with the taste of the present day, that sense of the practical character of Christianity which dictated

it to them will never, we trust, be absent from your minds. The torch is kindled, not that its brightness may be admired, but that it may give light; and you, as the guides of souls, are to carry it forth into the darkness of the world, in order to direct the steps of every wanderer "into the way of peace;" or, to use the nobler metaphor of the apostle himself, you are to "hold forth the word of life;" the beacon which is elevated by night on a dangerous shore to guide the tempest-driven mariner, amidst the terrors of shoals, and rocks, and sounding breakers, into the desired haven.

There is the critical and expository mode of preaching; a rich and salutary means of "feeding the Church of God," by unfolding the meaning of Scripture in its connection and argument, or in the import of its separate terms. This is, indeed, rather "a sign to them that believe, than to them that believe not;" yet the talent is of great value whenever imparted, and the best effects, though they may not be strong or sudden ones, ultimately result from its judicious use. But, in this practice, "the sound" and well-disciplined mind will recollect that there are parts of the Scripture, the exposition of which is rather to be pursued in the closet than the pulpit, and given to the Church in the form of writing rather than preaching; and that criticism should be employed in our public exercises only to illustrate subjects and terms the knowledge of which is chiefly necessary to direct edification.—It will teach you to take heed that learning evaporates not in mere words, but that it terminates in things; and that men should "be pleased," in this respect, as in every other, only "for their good to edification."

There is the sententious mode of preaching, where every thing superfluous is cut off, and great truths are concentrated into narrow limits, and compacted into weighty and pointed sayings. This is, in some, a great gift from God; much traditionary wisdom from the earliest ages has been thus preserved, and the sayings of eminent men have often outlived the influence, and even the memory, of their character and actions. But when this talent exists in a preacher, a sound judgment will teach him that a string of proverbs is not a sermon; that the generality of our hearers need copiousness as well as point, "line upon line, precept upon precept," not only "here a little," but "there a little," also; and that they usually feel the breadth of the surface, more than the fineness of the edge, of any truth. Our Lord's parables are all a kind of proverbs, or may easily be reduced to proverbs; but he stoops to the infirmity of the common class of hearers, clothes the sentiment with story, and exhibits in action its variety of application.

Opposed to the concise and sententious is the diffuse and declamatory method; one, too, of vast, and perhaps chief utility. In this the thoughts may not always be numerous; but they are enforced by repetition, presented in varied aspects, and clothed and made attractive by appropriate imagery. But if this important talent be committed to your use, you will have need of "a sound mind" to give it its full efficiency. You must often restrain your copiousness, lest you expand it into feebleness; you must often severely chastise the inventive faculty, lest, while you occupy the imagination, you miss the conscience.

There is the awakening and alarming kind of preaching, which, as

"knowing the terrors of the Lord," you must often adopt; and there is the mild and inviting announcement of the mercies of your Saviour. But both must be under the direction of a sound and comprehensive judgment. In itself, and by itself, each would be ineffectual, because an imperfect method of ministering the truth to men, and because each supposes other truths with which it is essentially connected. The preaching of man's spiritual extremity and danger supposes his remedy and refuge in Christ; for if you have no Saviour to offer, why "torment" the unpitied wretch "before his time?" What kind of ministry is yours, if you make him "lift up his eyes in torment," and give him not even a "drop of water to cool his tongue;" if you fix his despairing eye upon an unmeasurable "gulf," and yet show him no path to life across the chasm? It is not certainly "the ministry of reconciliation," the glorious designation of that which is now "committed" to you. On the other hand, the exhibition of promises of mercy supposes danger and misery; a danger and misery, too, which men must be brought deeply to feel, or, mild as may be your tones, and persuasive your accents, you will be to them "as one who hath a pleasant voice, and playeth well upon an instrument;"—all will evaporate in sound, for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

5. The last character of "a sound mind" which I shall suggest to you, is, that it is practical; by which I mean, that it always respects the end of its efforts, and cannot rest until that end is attained.

Apply this to the Christian ministry. Our profession is that of "saving souls from death;" and to this our deepest anxieties ought to be directed; for he trifles with his God, with himself, and with his charge, who rests in mere duty, and is not concerned for the result.

I am sick, and send for a physician. He discourses to me on medical science; he feels my pulse, and goes into a dissertation on the circulation of the blood. He discovers that I labour under some organic disease, which he demonstrates to me from the anatomy of the body, and a comparison of healthy action and morbid symptoms. All this is well; I admire his science, I admit his deductions, and I give him my confidence, but I find that he is making no use of his knowledge of my case, except to add it to his catalogue of facts, to increase his own store of knowledge, and to enable him to make a farther display of his theoretic skill to some other patient. This surely is not what I need. Medical skill is of the first importance to me, but it must be skill applied to my case; and I seek from my physician advice, medicine, and a careful attention to the effect of both, with direct and conscientious reference to my cure. If these are withheld, I meet, indeed, with a man wise in physic, but not a healer; a describer, but not a curer of diseases. Brethren, you can apply this. Your people need a moral cure; "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint:" it is not enough that you know the remedy; you must study its application, and watch the effects. Your great business is to work the cure; and you would only betray their confidence the more fatally by your theoretic qualifications, were you to forget this. Be anxious, then, for success; to this be all your efforts and prayers directed,—so to run in this race, that you may bear away the prize of many a rescued soul; "so to fight, not uncertainly as one that beateth the air;" so to teach, that you may truly enlighten; so to reprove, that you may convince; so to

preach Christ, that men may "look unto him and be saved;" so to lead the sheep, "that they may go in and out, and find pasture;" so to guard the fold that no breach may be made upon it; so to seek, that you may save: and thus, having been "wise to turn many to righteousness," you will wear them as your diadem of honour, and shine in the lustre of their salvation, and in the glory of your own reward, "as the stars for ever and ever."

My brethren, I finish with the topic with which I commenced. This "spirit of courage, love, and of a sound mind," is the "gift" of God. Use, then, every means to attain it. Drink at the fountain of inspiration; "meditate on these things, give yourself wholly to them," set before your minds inciting examples. Think of your solemn final account. Add to all the spirit of prayer, and faith; unchanging faith in the promise of Him who now sends you forth under his commission "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

And now I dismiss you. I give you joy of your office. I congratulate you on your unanimous reception by your brethren. We rejoice to see so many qualified young men before us, the hope of our Churches, some of them the sons of our preachers, endued with good learning, the fruit of our own schools, now sanctified by the call of God. "Instead of the fathers," names honoured by us, "come up the children;" a circumstance at once affecting to our hearts, and inciting to our gratitude. But, whether you are the sons of those who have laboured with us in the word and doctrine, or otherwise, we rejoice to believe as to you all, that you are anxious to be able and successful ministers of the New Testament. Take then the deposit of those precious truths which have given spiritual life to our nation, and are giving life to the world. Take the example of so many venerable men, to whose labours you owe your souls. Gather up the mantle of our ascended Elijahs, and wear it with "a double portion" of their spirit. How many of those whom you now see before you are passing away; stealing into obscurity through infirmity, or tottering with age on the brink of the grave! We must "decrease," but you will "increase." We rejoice in your brightening light, and pray that many years of usefulness may be granted to you. Peace be to you, and peace to the Jerusalem upon whose walls you shall be the watchmen day and night. Receive our blessing in the name of the Lord; and take, above all, "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace;" shed this abroad wherever Providence may direct your labours, and leave it in all its richness to those who shall succeed you, as you are succeeding us.

SERMON VIII.—*God with us.*

The Substance of a Sermon preached before the Conference, at Sheffield, Aug. 1829.

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii, 28.

THE important sentiment contained in the text stands among many others which would be equally new and wonderful to the philosophers and inquisitive "men of Athens." That they were not without all

knowledge of the true God, is certain. St. Paul quotes a passage in proof of this from one of their own poets; and several of their philosophic sects admitted one supreme God, of whom they sometimes spake eloquently and nobly. Like other idolaters, however, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." They confined him chiefly to his own celestial dominion; conceived of him as an inactive spectator of the works of men; parcelled out the management of the universe among inferior deities; and transferred that trust and honour, which ought to have been exclusively reserved for the one God, to beings of their own invention, or to the spirits of departed kings, heroes, and sages of ancient times; and amidst the elaborate and pompous religious services which they rendered to these idols, "they forgot God."

To hear that the very Being, whom they thought so distant and so unconcerned with human affairs, was ever employed in arranging all the events of their lives, and had "fixed the bounds of their habitation;" that he had done this in his mercy, in order "that they should seek after him and find him;" "that he is not far from any one of us;" but is indeed so near, that if any dark and bewildered spirit would but "feel after him," he should find him; so near, that "in him we live, and move, and have our being;"—these indeed were new truths; and, happily, they were not preached to the Athenians in vain. Some indeed "mocked;" others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter;" but the foundation of a Church, never entirely to perish from Athens, was then laid: "Certain men clave unto him, and believed; among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

That such truths, after so great a lapse of time, and even among those professing to receive the doctrine of St. Paul, should still need to be preached, is a problem which will, at first sight, be either questioned or pronounced difficult to solve. Yet, is it so, that in the full and true meaning of these words, all who profess faith in the New Testament believe that God "appoints the bounds of our habitation," and regulates the affairs of men by constant control and guidance? that he is so "near," that a seeking soul shall find a present God, and break out of its natural darkness into the light of his manifested presence? and that in him "we live, and have our being;" that is, are kept in existence, not by a sort of general law, but by incessantly repeated acts of upholding and succour? We meet, I fear, with many sad and affecting proofs of the contrary. We have not, it is true, exchanged Christianity for pagan philosophy; but we have philosophized upon it in a pagan manner; and still holding, with professed reverence, the letter of the truth, we have given to it a Gentile interpretation.

This is one of the errors of the day. In the revelations of this sacred volume, God is brought near to us; so near to us, that we are told that in him "we live, and move, and have our being." In much of the philosophy which wears the garb of Christianity, he is again placed far from us; not so far, indeed, that he is removed quite out of sight, and wholly unacknowledged and forgotten; but so far as to weaken the foundations of our trust in his power and grace; and to chill those warm and lively emotions of the affections toward him, in which our piety has both its joy and its strength.

This is the subject now brought before you; and I shall select some

illustrations of the errors against which we need to be guarded; and by showing their fallacy, endeavour to prepare our minds to receive a stronger impression of those great and comprehensive truths which the text either contains or suggests.

I. Our first illustration may be taken from that arranged and exquisitely ordered material world with which we are surrounded, and of which we form a part.

The philosophy to which I allude is often, with reference to those great and impressive phenomena, far from comporting with the doctrine of the text. It acknowledges indeed God to be the Creator, and also the Upholder and Conservator of all things; but still its theory is but a Christianized paganism. It is continually substituting for the God in whom all things live, and move, and have their being, some invention of its own; and though this should be nothing more than a set of terms and phrases, which, in point of fact, have no meaning, it rests in them, fully satisfied with the discovery. Thus it resorts to its "laws of nature," and to its "second causes;" and these it multiplies again, till it throws back the First and only efficient Cause to an unmeasurable distance; weakens or denies the doctrine of his immediate agency; and, in fact, puts God far from us. If the earth wants rain, it directs my attention to the laws of the atmosphere, the influence of the winds, the process of evaporation from the ocean, or the causes on which that may depend; and then, beyond this vast space, filled by intervening agents, it indeed allows me to see God. If I am sick, or in health, I am forbidden to think immediately upon the hand which smites, or the power which heals me: constitutional peculiarities, medicine, air, diet, and other second causes come in; and, in this case, again put God far from me. These instances are sufficient for illustration; and the fault which is charged upon these philosophizing Christians is not, that secondary causes are investigated, arranged, and exhibited by their industry; but that too frequently they do this in an atheistical manner; and that these second causes are used, not as manifestations of God, but as veils to hide him from the sight of his creatures,—in a word, as criminal contrivances to forget him.

The philosophy of the Scriptures bears a very different character. Does the rain fall? It is "our Father in heaven" who sends it "upon the just and the unjust." Is the earth vested with verdure? It is "God who so clothes the grass of the field." Do day and night succeed each other? It is "he that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that maketh the seven stars, and Orion." Do the elements rage? "Flames of fire are his messengers," and "stormy winds fulfil his word." Am I sick? His "rod" is upon me. Am I in health? "He healeth all my diseases." So the inspired writer, collecting, as it were, the whole universe of creatures, and all their agencies, into one view, exclaims, "All things serve thee,"—run on thy messages, fulfil thy commands, execute thy counsels.

Where, then, lies the fallacy which, in this plausible philosophy, cheats us out of that sense of the ever-present, ever-working, yet unwearied Power, of which we ought always to be sensible? There is no need, in order to preserve and uphold this doctrine, at once the most pious, and the most noble, to deny any thing that is said of subordinate causes. That they exist, it were absurd to question; and.

indeed, their existence is a part of the grandeur of the doctrine of the text, rightly understood; for true theology is always true philosophy: and where the theology is bad, the philosophy will ever be "vain."—That text resolves the whole: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Life is from him; motion is from him; and that which lives and moves, even our very essence, is unceasingly dependent upon him. But then this is not to be taken generally, and in mass; it is as true of every individual as of the whole race; as true of every individual particle of which our frame is composed, as of the whole frame itself; it is true of the first subordinate cause, which the Supreme Power puts into motion, and by which we may be affected for good or for evil; and it is equally true of the second, which as much "lives, and moves, and has its being" in God as the first; and the third as the second; and the fourth as the third. Multiply these as you please, God is in and with that agent which reaches me at last. He is so as immediately as with the distant first. It is thus that we gain the glorious truth, that "he is not far from any one of us." No distance extends itself between me and God; no creature separates me from him, but is the very instrument by which he comes to me. For if there be a chain of causes and effects, he not only sustains it, but lives and acts along its whole line; and thus may we "foresee him always before us," "all in all," and all in every thing. The creature derives its whole force from God; and we, and all that concerns us, are "in his hand."

II. Our second illustration may be taken from what is usually called providence. That branch of his government, so designated, to which I refer, respects the affairs of men; and where it is allowed that God governs his creatures, this very doctrine itself might be supposed necessarily to imply such a control on his part, and interpositions so marked, as shall make it obvious to reason, that he is "not far from any one of us;" although, as to sense, the hand which moves every thing should remain without that visible manifestation which took place in "the times of old."

So various, however, are the inventions of this philosophizing Christianity to put God far from us, even in his government of men, that we are in danger of quite forgetting him; and the whole case is often so cautiously stated, that we are liable to the charge of fanatical presumption if we believe and maintain, in the full sense of the text, that we both "live, and move," as well as "have our being," in him.

Hence we have the law of moral causes and effects. It might be startling language to call the decays and reverses of a nation "Divine judgments," or to attribute national prosperity and strength to God's blessing. We must proceed more philosophically, and remember that, by a moral law of our being, national weakness and decay are linked to national vices, as these naturally spring from wealth, ease, and luxury; and, on the contrary, that the strength of a country, by the same law, results from its public and private virtues.

We have also the law of circumstances. These call forth, both as to nations and individuals, their good or their bad qualities; and are more or less favourable and inciting to the full developement of both. We thus account for the whole moral phenomena presented by ancient and modern states, and by the individuals who surround us.

But to what does this affected verbiage amount? What real wisdom

is there in this "vain philosophy," constructed upon "the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ?" We also allow this law of moral causes and effects; but we ask, Who is its author? Who is it that with steady hand so connects the cause and the effect together, that, wrestle with it as men have done in all past, and will do in all future ages, vice shall produce misery, and virtue tend to strength and happiness? We allow, also, the law of circumstances, rightly understood; but who is it that so arranges and varies them as to put nations, as well as individuals, into different conditions of trial and responsibility by the circumstances which surround them? It is He who determines "the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;" and who carries into effect, by various operations, mediate and immediate, extending often from age to age, and embracing immense multitudes of individuals, what he had before designed. Thus he acts as to nations, and thus he shows that he is "not far from" them.

But in the case of individuals, involving as it does the doctrine of a particular providence in all its extent, this philosophy still more fatally stumbles.

The lot of individuals, with the varied circumstances which characterize it, is often seen intimately connected with that of other individuals; and their interests sometimes also appear inseparably linked with the arrangements of providence as to nations, or with those large portions of the community of which they form a part; nay, sometimes with the laws of nature themselves.

These are indeed facts which often occur; and we are therefore asked, whether it is reasonable to expect that God should interpose, with respect to individuals, to the continual interruption and unsettling of his general plans, and the very principles and laws which he has impressed upon all nature?—

> **"When the loose mountain trembles from on high,**
> **Shall gravitation cease, if thou go by?"**

But what, in fact, do such objections rest upon, except this,—that I cannot see in many cases how general plans can at all consist with interpositions of God in respect of individuals, for judgment or for mercy? The difficulty of the case may indeed be acknowledged; it may often be intricate and inextricable; but are there not previous considerations and first principles to be settled before I can come to a satisfactory conclusion? The God of providence, and the Author of this sacred volume, is the same Being; and, if so, am I not bound, as a professed believer in the Divine authority of the Scriptures, to inquire, whether he has made any revelation on the subject of particular government and his special interpositions as to individuals? For if the God of providence, and the God of the Scriptures, be the same Being, then there must be the most perfect harmony between the principles laid down in the Bible, and God's actual administration of the affairs of men. But it cannot be denied, that we find the doctrine of a particular providence in the Scriptures. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths:" here God is represented as the guide of all good men, personally and individually, who acknowledge him by acts of prayer and trust. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee:" here God promises the interposition of an immediate

deliverance, dependent upon prayer. "Thou shalt not be afraid of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day:" here personal protection in a time of general calamity is promised. So, if we come to the New Testament, its general declarations on these subjects all imply the regard which God pays to the cases of individuals. We are forbidden to be anxiously careful for the morrow, "what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed," upon the principle that our heavenly Father "knoweth that we have need of such things." So particular, also, does our Saviour represent the notice and care of God to be, that his disciples are encouraged to trust in him, on the assurance, that "a sparrow falls not to the ground without the knowledge of God," and that "the very hairs of their head are all numbered." And, in precisely the same views, St. Paul exhorts the members of the Churches, speaking to them as individuals, "to be careful for nothing, but in every thing," that is, in every case of want and difficulty, to "make their requests known unto God." You argue, then, from your own obscure notions respecting God's general plans of providential administration to the improbability of such special and immediate interpositions in behalf of individuals as have always been held among sound Christians; but we turn, as to a surer ground, to these plain and unequivocal declarations of inspired verity; and, so far from allowing that God is so "far from us," considered in our individual character, as your scheme supposes, we maintain that he is, as another scripture expresses it, "near to all them that call upon him."

Perhaps the objectors say, "We do not deny the truth of these passages of Scripture; but surely we may, and must, interpret them reasonably. We see proofs that God does act upon general plans; that there are established courses of administration, and uniform laws in the government of men, as well as in nature; otherwise we could derive no wisdom from the past, and human experience would be a delusive light; and being so assured of this by experience and observation, we are bound to give to these passages of holy writ a more general interpretation." This, however, is but to say, in fact, that such texts must be made to mean any thing or nothing, in subservience to a human theory. Try the case, for instance, upon the passage before quoted: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee;" which, upon this "more general interpretation," must mean, "'Call upon me,' by acknowledging me as the general Governor of the affairs of men, and if thou happenest to live at a time when my general plan requires the exercise of mercy and goodness to a whole people, or to that part of a community with which thou art connected, thou shalt be delivered; but, if not, thy trouble must remain; for general plans cannot be dispensed with." The folly and the guilt of such interpretations are equally apparent; and, if indulged in, as they too often are on various subjects beside this, would amount to a proud rejection of the whole revelation of God.

But we may farther observe, that the principle of opposing the general plans of God in his government of the world to the doctrine of his interposition in behalf of individuals, is itself full of misconceptions and errors. For,

1. It assumes, that God's general plans as to nations or large portions

of communities comprehend all individual cases, and all the circumstances which may affect them. This is absurd, and obviously contrary to the fact. By a dispensation of mercy to a nation, general prosperity may be vouchsafed; but does it follow, that every individual partakes of the blessing; or that the stream of bounty may not, consistently with the general design, be dammed up, and diverted from its course, as to particular persons, without affecting the general condition of the community? Suppose, for instance, the head of a family, upon whose personal exertions the interests of many others depend, be visited by protracted sickness, and laid aside from his business or profession; how shall he avail himself of the general prosperity around him, and turn it to his own and his family's advantage? Or how shall his widow and orphan children escape depression and poverty, should the husband and the father be removed by death before their worldly interests are provided for? A pestilence sweeping through a country is a general judgment; but, in the worst instances, all do not die, nor even all sicken. Here the general visitation has manifestly a thousand modifications, subject to no obvious law; and it submits to circumstances which must often be of a personal, and, apparently to us, an accidental, kind. If, then, there are innumerable circumstances which the general plan does not infallibly control, but which so often modify it, and alter its course as to individual cases; if beside the general wheel, there are "wheels within that wheel," and often without it too, turning on their own centres, and impelled even into contrary motions; we may fully admit the doctrine of general plans and laws of administration, and yet find in these loose and free circumstances, which operate independently of, or greatly modify, the general range of events, an ample field for the manifestation of that particular providence of which we speak; and which can make as many exceptions as that Divine wisdom sees fit which directs the whole. After all, it will often be found that it is not "well," even as to external things, "with the wicked," when all is well with the general state of affairs; nor ill "with the righteous," when various judgments are abroad, avenging God's cause upon a sinful people. Often shall those words be realized by the former: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:" and as to the righteous, the Divine hand shall be laid upon the general visitation; and God shall make "a hedge about him, and about all that he hath."

2. A second fallacy involved in this theory is, that it assumes that interpositions in favour of individuals must necessarily interfere with some general plan of Providence, or some general law of nature. But, when it is said, "When he giveth quietness, who then shall make trouble? And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him, whether it be done to a nation, or to a man only?" this text manifestly distinguishes between a government of nations, and a government of individuals: and it certainly supposes that "quietness" may be given to an individual, when it is not given to a nation; and that the face of God may be hidden from a particular person, when it is not hidden from a whole community. And then, as to the laws of nature, was any thing more trifling ever put into infidel verse than we find in the couplet of Pope before quoted?—

> "When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease, if thou go by?"

Shall the general law of gravitation be suspended to preserve a man who has "committed his way unto the Lord," and prays to him for protection from all evil during the day? Perhaps not; and for this reason, that there may be no necessity for it. God is not confined to one mode of saving. Suppose a strong impulse, or a trifling accident, urges him to put off his journey; or suppose something to occur to hasten his passing the mountain some moments before it falls, or to retard it till the moment after; or suppose that, instead of saving him from the danger, his great Protector should save him in it; and that the man whom He makes his care should sustain the apparent accident in such a way, that the falling ruin should arch him over, instead of crushing him; and that he should be dug out alive, and unhurt. There are a thousand ways known to God, and many conceivable even by us, by which, without interfering with general laws at all, he may honour the man who has honoured him, by acknowledging and trusting in him "in all his ways." "Lo, these things worketh God oftentime with man, to keep back his soul from the pit; that he may be enlightened with the light of the living."

3. The third fallacy lies in assuming that God's general plans are something which he has commissioned to act out of himself, and independent of his own immediate agency; wholly forgetful of the principle of the text, that in him we and all things "live, and move, and have our being." For what are God's general plans, but himself in operation? —now spreading the impulses of his power to a wider, now restraining them to a narrower, extent; now working in judgment, then in mercy, and again singularly commingling both; attempering the severity of vengeance with compassion, and guarding mercy from abuse by the majesty of righteousness; assigning longer or shorter periods to his dispensations of vengeance or goodness, as it pleases him; and thus working onward to the fulfilment of all those purposes which he has fixed in his own eternal counsels as the final results of his government of human beings? But if this be so, if all be God in operation, to what general laws is he so bound, as that this should interfere with his manifestations of severity or grace toward individuals? The blind, impetuous ocean must roll whither winds and tides may impel it: it has no intelligence, no feeling: it cannot select the victim vessels which it may hurl upon the rocks, or the favoured sails which it may bear buoyant and safe into the harbour: and your theory dishonours God, by likening his general operations to some such mighty but blindly impelled and impelling element. The Divine administration is Divine intelligence, will, feeling, and wisdom, in action; and when his arm is made bare, and his judgments sweep, or his mercies expand, over a nation, he can never be at a loss in his general march to turn aside to visit an individual sinner secure in his trespasses; or to make it "light in the dwellings" of his Israel, when the clouds of his judgments darken through the abodes of the ungodly. The destroying angel had a fearful general commission in Egypt; but his sword gleamed harmlessly as he passed the door sprinkled with that sign of faith, the blood of the appointed atonement. God is then "not far from any one of us;" and we may take the full comfort of the declaration, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, that he may show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward him." And how

many instances are on record, resting upon evidence the most indisputable, to confirm the doctrine! A "vain philosophy" may attempt to account for them; but the absurdities into which it falls are its own refutation. During the late struggle of the Greeks to regain their liberty, a body of Turks were, in 1824, encamped in a part of Greece, and committed every kind of excess upon the inhabitants. One of these barbarians, an officer, had pursued a Greek girl, who took refuge in the house of a widow. The widow met him at the door, and mildly attempted to dissuade him from forcing his way in to seize the girl.—Enraged, he drew his sabre; but when in the act of attempting to cut down the widow, it snapped in two pieces before it reached the victim. The wretch paused; but drew a pistol, to accomplish his purpose in that manner; but it missed fire: and when in the act of drawing a second, he was forcibly dragged away by one of his companions, who exclaimed, "Let her alone. Do not you see that her time is not yet come?" Resolved, however, on taking some revenge, he carried off her infant child to the camp; but, as though Providence designed to complete its work on this occasion, while the officer was asleep, the child was carried back to the widow by one of his own men.* I know how a heartless skeptic would quibble here; but the affecting story bears its own comment: and I would take the grateful tears of the preserved widow, who saw the hand of God in her deliverance, not only for the best feeling, but for the best philosophy. "All his saints are in his hand;" and where is the saint whom he has not "encompassed about with songs of deliverance?"

III. We find a third illustration in religious opinions.

The opinions we form on religious subjects are of the first importance; for the other powers of the soul follow in the train of the understanding, and are influenced by it. How, for instance, shall we will any thing, but as we see in it reasons of choice? How shall we love, but as we see reasons of preference and desire? If this our great intellectual eye be "sound," then shall we be "full of light;" but if it be diseased, "how great must be our darkness!"

The question, whether we are left to ourselves to form religious opinions, is settled by the fact, that God has granted us a revelation from himself on all the subjects connected with our moral state and relations. He has, however, done more than this; he condescends to become the secret teacher of the meaning of his own revealed word; and not only to present it to our attention, but to "open our understandings," that we may know the Scriptures. It is thus that he visits us as "the day spring from on high, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace."

But as this view supposes a secret influence of God upon the mind, it cannot be tolerated by those who boast themselves to be rational Christians. It is bringing God too near to man for their philosophy. But in their case the doctrine of direct Divine influence is rejected, not, I fear, from humility, which is often the pretence, but from self sufficiency. So near, indeed, will such persons allow that God has been to man, that he has spoken to us by "holy men of old;" so near,

* This anecdote is verified by the Rev. Mr. Arundel, author of "A Visit to the Seven Churches of Asia," who was in the village at the time.

that he authenticated their inspiration by "signs, and miracles, and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost;" but when this extraordinary work of the Spirit was accomplished, it is contended, nothing more was necessary; and that man, left to himself, is as competent to collect the sense of holy Scripture, as that of any common and uninspired writing on any subject within the comprehension of an ordinary intellect. This theory is often exhibited in plausible guise; but it will be sufficient for its refutation, if we can show that it leaves the case of man wholly unprovided for; and that if God were to stand thus "far from us" in our inquiries into the mysteries of his religion, not one of us could ever come to the effectual knowledge of the truth. For,

1. Man is not only indifferent, but even averse and hostile, to that very truth which he is urged to study, and which his unassisted powers are said to be adequate fully to apprehend. Here is the first difficulty which presents itself. We may not, indeed, be averse to every part of revealed truth. The Bible has a history, a poetry, a charm in the style of its narrative, a power in its exhibition of character, and a sublimity of doctrine, which shall often engage the attention, and gratify the taste, of even worldly and unregenerate men. But the test lies not here. Do they love the truth which reproves and condemns them? the truth which faithfully lays open their soul's danger, and presses it upon their fears? the truth which strips them of all plea of worthiness and merit, and brings down the most virtuous among them to the common level of all sinners, as to merit, in the sight of God, to be "justified freely by his grace," "through faith?" We daily see the contrary; and as to every such truth, when presented to them, so far are they from having the disposition calmly and with interest to investigate its evidence and its import, they exclaim, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" What, then, shall bring the minds of such men—supposing them even to be able, without assistance from the teaching Spirit, to enter fully into their meaning—to study such truths, so necessary to their salvation, with an intense anxiety not to be mistaken in them, and with perfect sincerity? A power independent of man's heart must be supposed. No man of his own accord ever took the Scriptures, and read himself into self knowledge, penitence, alarm, and abasement; no man ever persuaded another to do this; and, in the nature of the case, a visitation from on high must be supposed, to conquer the natural aversion of the heart to truths of this class, and to make a man willing to take the gauge of his own wretchedness and danger, and to offer up all his pride and false hope "to be hewn in pieces before the Lord," by the sword which proceedeth out of his mouth.

2. We are to consider that the love of sin, in some form or other, is found in every man while in his natural and unregenerate state. But wherever this is found, it infallibly darkens the judgment on all subjects of vital importance in religion. This was exhibited among the Pharisees of our Lord's time. I grant the case is an extreme one; and that it presents an awful picture of men so blinded by their passions, as to be impenetrable to the force of the most stupendous evidence, and to persecute unto death the incarnate Son of God, notwithstanding that obvious stamp of divinity which his "mighty works" had impressed upon him. But this dark picture is drawn, that, by seeing

the full effect of the principle, we may be made aware of its malignant character. A principle which could produce such effects in them cannot exist in any degree without perverting the judgment as to all those truths of religion, on which it is of the first importance that we should have the clearest conceptions. But if this same principle—the love of sin and the world—is found in all unregenerate persons, how is the meaning of the word of God to be attained fully by them, as the meaning of any other writing against which no such passion, and its darkening influence, operates? If you say that man must first conquer his evil propensities, and then come to the study of truth, you set him upon doing this without a right knowledge of that Divine revelation which alone fully describes his case, and teaches its remedy. If you bid him apply to God in prayer for the previous cure of his evil nature, in order to prepare him to receive the truth, then you suppose that God renews the heart of man independent of his word, which is expressly declared to be the instrument of our regeneration, and of sanctifying the Church; and farther, if you are obliged, in order to meet the case, to admit a direct Divine influence upon the will and affections, why should you hesitate to admit it as operating upon the understanding also? My brethren, we are not left without full information on this important point. There are two grand offices of the Holy Spirit which answer to each other, and which bring us fully out of the difficulty. He is the Teacher of men; but he is first the Spirit who "convinces" or reproves of sin; and when he thus fulfils his office by that power which he exerts through the word preached, read, or brought to mind, he strikes life into the soul which was before dead in trespasses and sins, and by awakening the fears makes truth the object of desire, however painful and reproving, if it may lead to salvation. The love of error is cured by this flash upon the conscience, and the soul stands prepared to be led by the teaching of God into all truth. Thus we see that we could never come to the knowledge of the truth, if God were far from us; and if we admit this, we cannot stagger at the next step, that he is the constant guide of the humbled spirit. Yes, the words of our Saviour are eternally true,—"I am the light of the world; if any man follow me," with a docile mind, "he shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life;" and when the teacher God is near, his law brightens before us into all the lustre of its celestial and awful purity; redemption exhibits a more illustrious fitness; duties are seen under higher reasons; holiness is arrayed in lovelier beauty; and promises disclose their heights and depths of meaning. Thus the understanding, filled with increasing light and conviction, leads up the other powers to their legitimate and vigorous exercise; the choice of the will is decided; the excitement of holy desires becomes more habitual and intense; effort is invigorated; the various graces of the regenerate character bloom and bear fruit under the clear heaven of a spirit filled with the light and influence of God; and "the man of God is thoroughly furnished for every good word and work."

IV. Our fourth illustration may be taken from internal religion.

The Christianized philosophy of which I speak is not, in every instance, to be charged with rejecting a religion of the heart. As held by some, it does allow it; but even in this its danger lies; for as it still places God far from us, in that very proportion it leaves man to

himself, and teaches him to look to no higher a resource than may be found in his own nature.

It allows of faith; but then its faith is a mere intellectual principle, and works its mighty effects in the way of natural process. It allows that prayer, to be effectual, must be the language of the heart; but then we are told that it benefits us, by working in us a moral preparation to receive God's gifts.

In other cases, perhaps, it allows that there is a witness of the Spirit to our adoption; but then this Spirit, we are told, is nothing more than the Spirit in the word, who has there described the moral characters of those who are the children of God; and that it is by comparing our own moral state with these recorded characteristics, that we are to apply his general testimony to ourselves.

It allows the devotional habit, that man is bound to walk with God in the silent converse of his heart; but devotion is taken to be no more than the impression made by the character, the works, and the benevolence of God, upon the affections. It is, in fact, sentiment flowing from the impressibility of our physical nature, when operated on by sublime and touching subjects; and which, in this case, stand connected with objects of religion, or those bearing some resemblance to them.

But God is not thus "far from us" in any of these respects. After all these misleading plausibilities, "God dwelleth with man upon earth;" and the true interpretation of "Immanuel" is, "God with us." It is indeed affecting to see the high and glorious spiritualities of our religion lowered, and stripped of all emphasis and meaning, by these imperfect and carnal views;—but it is not difficult to defend this branch of the truth of God also.

We deny not that faith, in the sense of belief, is a work of the intellect; but, in the Scripture sense of trust, and as a realizing principle, it is a work of the heart under special Divine influence, and so is a gift, since we are warranted to pray, "Lord, increase our faith." We deny not that he who meditates deeply upon his state, and wants, and dangers, is in a posture to receive the grace of prayer, and has received a measure of it already; but prayer is prevalent, not in moving something within ourselves, but in moving God; and it moves him, because "he knows what is the mind of the Spirit who maketh intercession in us, according to the will of God."

We deny not that there is a testimony of the Spirit in the word as to the true character of all who are the children of God; but then one of these characters is love to God as a Father, which I can never feel until by some means I know that he is not only the common Father of mankind, but my Father reconciled; and of this I must be persuaded before I can apply the rule. I am set, therefore, upon this impossible task, to infer from a general description of the moral character of the children of God, what has passed in the mind of God, as to my personal justification, and to discover in my own heart love to God as reconciled to me, while I have a trembling fear of him as a Judge. No, it is the Holy Spirit that "knoweth the mind of God," which "no man knoweth;" and his clearly revealed office is to show us, by his own direct impression upon the heart, what God has decided on the matter of our personal pardon; and hence we are taught, not that the Spirit, as having inspired the written word which lays down authoritatively

the terms of pardon to all, enables us to infer our adoption, but that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God;" and that he thus "abides with us" as "the Comforter."

We deny not that there is a natural aptitude in various subjects to produce impressions of awe or delight upon the mind. The grandeur and beauty of nature, the perfections of God, the character and love of Christ, the solemnities of judgment, and the glories of a future life, are of this description: and we allow, too, that all these impressions upon the susceptibility of our nature are very often used by "the good Spirit," as instruments of our edification; but if I regard them as religion itself, and not as the mere instruments employed by a higher agency, I either shut out God entirely, or I acknowledge him, it is true, as the God of nature, who has thus made us with these susceptibilities, but reject him as the God of grace, who, by special influence, turns them to his own merciful purposes. In a word, I make religion a natural, not a supernatural process. And am I told by the apostle, in the very verses under my eye, that even a poor heathen, enveloped in his darkness, if he but "feel after God, if haply he may find him," shall indeed find him, and for this very reason, that "he is not far from any one of us;" and shall I expect still less under a dispensation which is eminently "the ministration of the Spirit?" Have we not heard that Christ is "the way to the Father?" Have we not heard him say, "If any man love me, and keep my sayings, my Father will love him, and I and my Father will come to him, and take up our abode with him?" Nay, read we not in St. Paul, that "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" with him? Shall we then chill and wither these glorious doctrines? No, my brethren; we will hold fast the testimony of God. He that seeks shall find him; shall "walk with God;" shall drink, not at the distant stream flowing only in the channel of the creature; but at the Fount of life himself; shall "see the Invisible" by faith; shall converse with him, though not "face to face," yet thought to thought; and prove how deep and rich is the meaning of the blessed words of the text, when applied to the experience of a truly spiritual man, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being."

V. Our last illustration shall be taken from the revival and extension of religion.

We are truly taught, that the good done upon earth is done by the Lord; that, though Paul plant, and Apollos water, "God giveth the increase;" that when the Lord buildeth up Zion, he "appears in his glory;" that it is the Lord who "sends forth his labourers into the harvest;" and that "in the latter days" there are promises which relate to the "pouring out" of his Spirit. These declarations bring God very near to his Church. Perhaps, indeed, the most illustrious instances in which our God makes "bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations," by throwing off that veil of mystery which so often hides it, are found in the struggles and triumphs of his religion. The history of his Church is, for this very reason, chiefly, the most magnificent part of the world's story. The trials and the contests of the truth, of which she is the ground and the pillar, considered in connection with its endurance and unfailing vigour; the holy blood which has consecrated, the virtues which have illustrated, the great characters which have advocated it; the darkness it has dissipated, the enmity over

which it has triumphed; the blessings it has showered upon earth, the number of our race which it has glorified in heaven;—these and many other views might be taken, which so powerfully tend to maintain in us the conviction that there is in the Church a mighty and constant working of Him "that filleth all and in all," as to forbid the intrusion of any creature into this hallowed enclosure, except as the most humble instrument in his hands. Yet, even here also, is God often put far from us; or so many other agents are placed between, that our sense of his immediate operation is either destroyed or greatly enfeebled.

Christianity, it is allowed, is to become the religion of the world; but then its ultimate prevalence may be easily accounted for, because Christianity is a rational religion, and the world is becoming enlightened by education. Great characters appear at intervals to revive and restore the faded lustre of the truth, and the languishing influence of piety; but then, as it has been said of Luther, nature planted in him the elements of a vigorous character; success flattered his first attempts to resist his superiors; political circumstances favoured the changes which he meditated; and thus we have the whole philosophy of the reformation! A Wesley appears: he is naturally "ambitious;" circumstances give to this mental quality a religious and a beneficial direction; he has the skill to turn them to account; and here is the complete rationale of the whole revival of religion in our day, and in these lands! Missions to the heathen will succeed, because they derive their influence upon barbarous and semi-civilized nations from the superior intellectual power with which they are associated, the arts they communicate, and the connection which they establish, by means of commerce, with nations far in advance as to all the useful and refining institutions of society!

Such are some of the views on these solemn subjects with which men amuse themselves; but I see nothing in them answering to the import of the text, "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" or to the declaration, that he "worketh all in all." On this point, indeed, as on several before mentioned, we allow, that in what is thus urged there is much truth; but the truth is either distorted, or turned into efficient error by the absence of other truths with which it ought to be connected.

True, Christianity is a rational religion; but if it is to make its way by the force of that consideration alone, why was it not at first most readily received by the wisest and best-disciplined minds, rather than by the unlettered and superstitious? True, circumstances have an influence upon the characters and conduct of men; but the characters and actions of holy, gifted, and devoted men create circumstances which they do not find, and that by the grace of God, "which is mighty in them," and which works in their hearts and lives that holiness, love, and zeal, by which, under the preparing influence of God, great masses of men are influenced. True, missions to the heathen derive, in many cases, great aid from superior intellectual power in the instruments; from the knowledge of useful arts which they introduce; and the connection into which they bring nations in an inferior state of civilization with the more cultivated states of the world; but then do we need nothing more direct than that Divine arrangement which has associated these circumstances together in the way of

providential government, "to convert a soul from the error of his ways," to turn the Gentiles "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," that they may "obtain remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified?"

Surely, my brethren, God is not thus "far from us" in reviving, restoring, and diffusing the influence of his religion. For what is that religion? Not "the letter," but "the Spirit;" "a ministration" of the Holy Spirit himself. What are its ministers? They are indeed men; but not men left to be formed or influenced by mere circumstances; they are "called," "separated unto the Gospel of God," and derive their energy as instruments, when it is saving, from Him who has promised to be "with them alway, even to the end of the world," and to use and overrule all circumstances for the accomplishment of their high vocation. If God is not in his Church, where then shall we find him? But he is there by peculiar inhabitation, by special operation. To make this manifest, he descended in the visible tongues of fire on the day of pentecost; to assure us of it, he hath said of Zion, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and make her saints joyful in goodness." To show what he has to do in raising up eminent instruments, he met with Saul of Tarsus, on his persecuting errand to Damascus; seized, in the very camp of the enemy, the instrument fitted by natural endowments for his purpose; and bound the energies of that great and ardent mind to his own cause for ever. To show that he is in his Church, he has defended it against united earth and united hell: to convince us that a power above all that is human is there, often when it has been "minished and brought low," and its root has been almost invisible in the earth, it has shot up into growth without human aid; and, in despite of human scorn and neglect, waved its branches in the winds, and again defied the force of all the storms of heaven. To show that he is in his Church, the mighty primitive power of the Gospel, which is characterized as "the power of God unto salvation," remains unabated to this day. It still "pricks men in the heart;" it wounds and it heals; it converts and sanctifies; it raises its shield of determined integrity against all temptations; it quenches earthly desires; it lifts the soul to holy converse with God; it gives a triumph over death, as complete and glorious as when Stephen "fell asleep, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and it effects all these wherever it is preached in simplicity, and in recognition of the immediate co-operation of God with the instrument, and there only. Nor is the scene of its trial, the grand experiment, if we may so call it, confined to one place: it erects the monuments of its saving efficacy on all the shores of earth, and among the various tribes which inhabit them, that all the world may know that "God is with us, and that the shout of a king is among us."

A few practical remarks may close the whole.

1. If God is so "near to all that truly call upon him," be encouraged then, thou dark and mournful spirit, to seek him until thou find him. Though thou see him not, "feel after him," in desire, in prayer, in the exercises of faith, however feeble. Thou canst not be more desirous to find him in his manifested character as God "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," than he longs to reveal himself to thee. Say

with David, "I wait upon God; my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope; I wait for him more than they that wait for the morning;" and thou shalt not be disappointed. "He is near that justifieth;" "his word is for ever settled in heaven,"—"And it shall come to pass, that they shall seek me and find me, when they seek for me with all their heart."

2. Let us all be encouraged by this blessed doctrine to seek a closer and more intimate fellowship with God. May I find him in my closet? Then let me seek him there with all the earnestness of desire. May I find him in his temples? Never may I rest in the shadows and forms of outward services, which, when rightly understood, are but the tracks through which I must fly "to put my trust under the shadow of his wings." May I walk with God? Let me aspire after the high, the hallowing privilege, to see the Invisible; to know how it is that Christ dwelleth in the hearts of believers by faith; how he manifests himself to his disciples, and not unto the world.

Finally, let us confidently trust the whole affairs of his Church with him. From that he is never "far." He has hitherto preserved, and will finally glorify it in the sight of all nations. "Kings shall bring their glory and honour unto it; her walls shall be salvation, and her gates praise." Still nearer may he be felt through all her courts, by all her ministers, in all her ordinances, till she "girds herself every where with strength," and shines forth in perfect truth and holiness, as "the light of the world, the joy of the whole earth."

SERMON IX.—*The Miracles of Christ.*

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John xx, 30, 31.

"SIGNS" are miracles,—a branch of evidence to which our religion appeals as decisive of its truth and divinity

The weight and sufficiency of this evidence may appear from universal acknowledgment. Among all people, in all ages, the force of the argument which flows so immediately from it has been appreciated; for the authors of all false religions have pretended miracles to establish their authority.

Nor does this consideration weaken the argument from miracles in favour of Christianity. There could be no counterfeit coin were there no genuine mintage; and false miracles had never been resorted to, had real miracles never been wrought. False religions appeal to false attestations; the true, to those on which God himself has set the stamp and seal of his own eternal power.

But what is a miracle?

It is not every extraordinary event which occurs in nature, although figuratively and popularly so denominated. There may be extraordinary floods, droughts, earthquakes, atmospherical appearances, meteors,

changes in the animal economy, and unlooked-for coincidences of events; and yet all may be resolved into the laws of the natural world, operating under peculiar circumstances, and none of them may necessarily suppose any special or immediate interposition of Deity, at least in order to authenticate any revelation of his will. Hence, not every portent which a people uninstructed in natural philosophy might be disposed to call miraculous, is to be clothed with that character; nor every occasional remarkable effect, which the wisest of men shall not be able to resolve into some known natural law, as the force of imagination in curing certain kinds of diseases and infirmities. The effect may be shown from various circumstances to be natural only, although the law under which it is produced is yet unknown, and may, in all future time, elude the keenest investigation, and the most splendid course of philosophical discovery. But a miracle is an effect produced by the immediate interposition of God, contrary to or above the ordinary laws of nature, and that for the confirmation of some doctrine or message as from himself, and having his sanction, though it should be delivered to us by the ministry of men like ourselves.

Having thus described the nature of a true miracle, considered in a theological view, I call your attention to "the signs" or miracles "which Jesus did." Many of these "mighty works" he performed in the presence of his disciples, which they have recorded; "many more," says St. John, "were done, which are not written," Divine wisdom permitting that the particulars of them should not be transmitted by inspired Scripture to a future age. But sufficient is the number recorded to lay a firm foundation for our faith, and through faith to effect our salvation. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

They are presented to our consideration under two views:—

I. As bearing the unequivocal character of real miracles, and therefore authenticating the mission and claims of Christ.

II. As accompanied with interesting circumstances, and ministering to us various points of important instruction.

I. As bearing the unequivocal character of real miracles, and therefore authenticating the mission and claims of Christ.

If the "signs which Jesus did" were true miracles, they prove the whole case; he was in truth the "Messiah, the Son of God," the Teacher sent from God, the Saviour and the Judge of the world; since they occurred, not as coincidences, but were actually wrought by him upon his own volition, and professedly in attestation of his mission and character. Now, in order to be impressed both with the truth and with the unequivocal character of these "signs," consider,

1. Their number. In a solitary instance, there might be a plausible plea set up against the alleged miracle; it might be said that there was some mistake, or deception, or exaggeration, or that the event was opportunely coincident, and was therefore taken advantage of to gain credit to the new Teacher and the new religion. But the number "of the signs which Jesus did" shuts out this objection entirely. Very many instances are recorded by the evangelists, with great particularity of circumstances, such as names, places, times, the nature of the diseases cured, and the events preceding and following; while they also

refer to places and occasions in which our Lord healed "multitudes" of sick, lame, and possessed persons, who, at different times, during his public ministry, in various parts of Judea, Galilee, Decapolis, and the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, were brought to him. So that, beside those particularly and circumstantially recorded in the Gospels, an immense number of similar instances were known to the inhabitants of all these regions, and of various cities where these "mighty works" were wrought, and had been witnessed by them.

2. Their publicity. While, on the one hand, there was no ostentation in the manner in which our Lord performed his works; and on many occasions a manner so retiring as to fulfil the words of the prophet, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets;" by far the greater number of his miracles were of the most public nature. Neither publicity nor privacy was affected; but they were wrought as circumstances arose, and as opportunities were presented, by the acts of others rather than by any arrangement of his own. They were wrought in the presence of his disciples, in the sight of multitudes in all parts of the country, in a great number of populous towns, in broad day, and, in fact, under the eye of a whole nation for nearly four years.

3. The character of the witnesses. Even the disciples were not over credulous; for they had this great stake at issue, to commit the case of their very salvation to one whose apparent character and claims were precisely opposed to those with which their imaginations had invested the true Messiah. In the multitude, the populace, there was no forwardness of faith, no eagerness to proclaim a lowly peasant, the Son of David, the King of Israel; but there was another class of men, who tracked all the steps of our Lord, watching his actions as captiously as they "lay in wait to entrap him in his speech." It was under the scrutinizing eye of Pharisees and Sadducees, an eye sharpened by the mixed passions of hatred, envy, and fear, that those works were often performed. When he restored the man blind from his birth, both that person and his parents were closely cross-examined before the great council of the Jews; and when Lazarus was raised from the dead, it was in the presence of many Jews of leading character and rank, who had come from Jerusalem. But even these men never denied the facts, and in reality fully acknowledged them in the wicked hypothesis they invented to account for them, so as to exclude the agency of God: "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Out of their own mouth therefore were they judged, and by them were the facts themselves confessed.

4. The nature of the works themselves. No class of events could be urged upon the attention of mankind, bearing stronger evidence of a supernatural character; so that if "the signs which Jesus did" were not miracles, then miracles can have no existence, and it would be impossible for a Divine mission to be authenticated to mankind by this species of evidence. They are not of a nature to be referred to the possible effects of imagination; nor to occult laws of nature, never till then developed; nor to fortunate coincidences. The universal experience of man up to that time, and since that time, proves that they were not only above nature, but in many instances contrary to all its fixed and uniform laws; so that we may say, with the blind man restored to sigh

by the very word of his Saviour, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man," any mere man, "opened the eyes of one that was born blind;" or that any man cured the leprosy by a touch, raised the dead by a word, walked upon the yielding waters as upon a rock, or commanded the winds and the seas, so that they should obey his voice.

5. To all these we must add, that, during the life of Jesus and his disciples, during the very age and in the places where these "signs" were wrought, multitudes believed on him. Now the foundation of their faith was these very miracles themselves. Worldly inducements to encourage an imposture they had none, but the contrary; their prejudices and vices were not flattered, but contradicted and reproved: they had all these motives for unbelief, none for credulity; and their conversion can only therefore be accounted for from the overwhelming evidences of the real occurrence and the unequivocally miraculous character of these "works of Jesus," upon which he and his disciples placed the proof of his Divine mission. They were themselves the witnesses of these "mighty works," or were surrounded by those who had been both the witnesses and, in many instances, the subjects of them; and, constrained by this evidence, which they knew to be unquestioned, and felt to be unquestionable, they yielded to be baptized into his name, and to suffer, and even die, for his sake. We need not enlarge. The facts themselves being established, the conclusion is irresistible, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

II. The miracles of Christ are to be considered as accompanied with interesting circumstances, and as ministering to us various points of important instruction.

"The signs which Jesus did," considered in these respects, form an almost inexhaustible subject: and the difficulty is, to condense our views within reasonable limits. In a general and brief survey of the miracles of our Lord, we may, however, discover that they are varied by circumstances which enable us to distribute them into different classes, and thus to bring them more distinctly under our view as to the great truths which they were doubtless intended to impress upon our hearts.

In the works of Christ there are, —

1. Miracles which were made subordinate to an explicit declaration of his Divinity.

The Divine character of our Lord was indeed indicated by the very manner in which he performed his "mighty works." He wrought them, not in the name of another, but in his own name; nor does he ever adopt the style of a servant. His attitude, his language, are always authoritative, never ministerial. "I say unto thee, Arise." "I command thee to depart out of him." "He rebuked the fever, and it left her." This very manner distinguishes him from the prophets of the old, and the apostles of the new, dispensation. But we also see several of the miracles themselves employed as occasions to assert the loftiest claims of Divinity. Thus, in the case of a paralytic, Christ associates a miracle of healing with his authority as God to forgive sins. When the man was first brought, he does not heal him, but declares his sins forgiven. And when this startles the Pharisees, he performs the miracle in support of a prerogative which, as none can forgive sins but God

unveils at once his real character: "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Again: when, by a miraculous influence exerted upon them, he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, he not only, by a superhuman majesty of aspect, terrified the crowd of guilty profaners, but claimed as his own that temple in which he often appeared as a common worshipper: "My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." And when he cast out devils, they are sometimes constrained to confess him as the Son of God before all the people; and when they ask, on one occasion, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" they tremblingly acknowledge him to be the supreme and universal Judge, vested with the high and Divine prerogative of awarding the rewards and punishments of a future life.

The same great truth shines forth, also, in a second class, which we may call,

2. Miracles of impressive majesty.

This, indeed, is a deeply interesting class of those "signs which Jesus did." He was to appear among men with great humility, and to sojourn with them in the utmost lowliness of condition. He was to be "despised and rejected of men;" to submit to every indignity with patient resignation; and, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb," so was he not "to open his mouth." He was thus to live and thus to die; and yet, even in these his days of humiliation, he was to gather a people to himself, who were to receive him as "the Son of God, the King of Israel," and so to believe in him as to commit their eternal all into his hands. Such a task had been too difficult for the strongest faith, much more for the hesitating and flitting belief of his disciples, had there not been among his works not merely the common miracles which authenticated the prophetic mission, but "signs" which should manifest his superior character and personal glory. The cloud which enveloped him during his humbled state on earth was dark; but it was the cloud of the Shechinah; it was the Lord who "dwelt in the thick darkness;" and the shrouded Divinity occasionally beamed forth. Long continued was his humiliation; but these bursts of a superior nature, though transient, gave new impulses to a failing faith, or at least held unbelief in suspense until the final demonstration was given, that "he who emptied himself," and "made himself of no reputation," was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

Under his benediction bread multiplies, and thousands are fed in a wilderness; he walks upon the sea, and the yielding element sinks not beneath his footsteps; amidst the uproar of a storm he utters his simple command, "Peace, be still," and the winds hear, and die away: "the waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee, and were afraid." At the mouth of the sepulchre he cries, "Lazarus, come forth!" and the dead, aroused by his voice, and loosed from his grave clothes, falls at the feet of him who is "the Resurrection and the Life;" and the whole series of these acts of majesty is crowned by the miracle of his own resurrection in the moment when the last spark of faith in the hearts of his followers quivered on the point of extinction. Then He, the

Conqueror of death in his own dominion, appears in the midst of them, and says, "Peace be unto you." Ah! who that considers such "signs" as these, such manifestations of a Divine majesty, but, with Thomas, must fall at his feet, and exclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

3. Miracles of tenderness.

The works of our Lord were uniformly benevolent; and his fame, as uniting equal benignity and power, spread so wide, and inspired such confidence, that wondering multitudes brought the sick, the lame, the possessed, and the blind, out of whole regions of country, "and he healed them all." But some of these works were characterized by or accompanied with circumstances of peculiar tenderness, and are recorded with the manifest design to encourage, in all future times, an unlimited confidence in his compassion and condescension.

The people, attracted by his teaching, follow him into the wilderness. As they had continued with him three days, and had consumed their provisions, he would not send them home hungry, "lest they should faint by the way;" and he multiplies the bread by miracle, and feeds them all. "He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people;" and as he was thus showing his compassion to their bodies, by diffusing health and life wherever he came, the sight of so great a multitude, a whole people without faithful and instructed ministers, causes a deeper flow of commiserating tenderness for their religious destitution and dangers; "and when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send labourers into his harvest."

But to the griefs and sorrows produced in families by sickness and death our Lord was particularly and affectingly sensible; and to relieve those cases where human nature is pierced most deeply through its most amiable sensibilities he was specially prompt. A nobleman brings the case of his sick son; and the anxious feeling of the parent is met by the instant declaration, "Go thy way, thy son liveth."—Another still more agonized father comes "kneeling to him, saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed." The attitude of the suppliant, and his amplification of the miseries of the child, show the intensity of the father's feelings. Nay, more; he had been painfully disappointed; he had brought his child to the disciples, and they could not cure him for want of faith. But shall he depart from the Master unhelped? No. "Bring him to me," said Jesus; and he rebuked the evil spirit, and the child was restored from that hour. In going into the city of Nain, Jesus and his disciples met a funeral; and the evangelist seems to have recorded certain affecting circumstances on purpose to show us how they wrought upon the sympathetic mind of our Lord. The deceased was a son, the only son of his mother, and that mother was a widow. The bereaved mother herself was following weeping, and many people of the city with her. Such a scene our Lord could not pass by; and when he saw her, "he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not;" and, having stopped the bier, he raised the youth to life, and with his own hand "he delivered

him to his mother." The story of the raising of Lazarus is equally familiar to you, and I need not dwell upon it. Jesus "groaned in spirit," "Jesus wept;" and the majesty of his triumph over death was equalled by the triumph of his compassion. He healed the breach made by death in a family of disciples, and wiped away then, as he will at last, all tears from the eyes of those who love him and are loved by him.

Why all these instances, and many others, of so affecting a tenderness and so deep a sympathy with human wo? Why, but as proofs of that great fact so strongly expressed by St. Paul, and which the splendour of the accompanying miracles was designed to render the more impressive, that he is a High Priest who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and who, having been tempted in all points like ourselves, knows how to succour them that are tempted?

4. Another class of miracles was obviously didactic, or designed to impress upon our minds some important point of doctrine.

When our Lord wrought a miracle to obtain a sum sufficient to pay the tribute money demanded of him and Peter, he intended to teach his disciples subjection to the fiscal laws of the power of which they might be the subjects, and to pay "custom to whom custom, tribute to whom tribute, honour to whom honour," are due. When, by a miraculous impression, he drove the traders from the temple, he taught that the places and the acts of worship are to be kept scrupulously free from the intrusions and distractions of secular things. The miraculous draught of fishes was designed to indicate the success of the apostles in their work of evangelizing all nations; for he immediately subjoins the moral, "Fear not, Simon, from henceforth thou shalt catch men;" and then they forsook all and followed him, as well understanding his meaning, in order to be fully trained for this glorious ministry. Perhaps, too, by this miraculous draught of fishes he intimated to them a truth which they at least afterward well understood and habitually recognized,—that their success in the ministry of the Gospel would be the sole result of the same miraculous power working in the depths of the hearts of men, which had wrought an effect in the depths of the ocean; so wondrous, too, as to be a certain demonstration, that the effect was not to be attributed to the skill of the fishermen, but to the power of God alone.

Several other instances might be given; but it must often have in particular impressed you, that the miracles of our Lord were, in a great number of instances, intended to teach,

5. The duty and necessity of faith; that is, a personal trust in his power and mercy. This is so important to us, that we may dwell upon it a little more at large.

As mere proofs of Christ's mission, his miracles of healing had been quite as strong, if he had not required faith, as an act of trust, from the persons who applied to him for relief, since they might have been appealed to by himself and his followers with equal force of argument, independent of the inward previous moral disposition of those who were the subjects of his healing power; and, in fact, are always so appealed to, when adduced as proofs of the claims of Christ, without any allusion to the circumstance whatever. This shows that our Lord intended, in such cases, something beyond increasing the number of

those miraculous attestations which proved his mission to be from God. He taught, in fact, that something more than mere assent, however deeply founded in conviction, would be required of men in order to their salvation. The faith which his religion was to make the condition of justification and sanctification, and all other spiritual blessings, was to be a personal trust in his power and grace; and he singularly honoured such a faith in those who came to seek relief from him for their various bodily infirmities, manifestly in order to show how he would honour it in us, whenever exercised. Mark the striking character of the instances by which this is illustrated. A leper comes in this faith, and, worshipping him, says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and the confidence so simply but emphatically expressed met with its instant reward. "And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

A centurion sends to Christ, praying that he would come and heal his servant; but, as he was drawing near, sends other messengers, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Here was faith! He declared, in fact, his full persuasion that our Lord had as absolute a command over diseases as he himself had over the soldiers placed under him; and that he had only to bid them come or go, and they would obey him.—Hence, though Christ should remain at a distance from the diseased person, he believed that he had only to "speak the word, and his servant should be healed." This faith was not only commended by our Lord, but honoured and confirmed. He did not go to the house; but he uttered his command, and "they that were sent returned to the house, and found the servant whole that had been sick." The disease had indeed obeyed the command of Omnipotence, and had fled!

That is a beautiful and affecting instance we before referred to, and which is recorded in Mark ix. A father brings his child sorely tormented by an evil spirit, the subject of long and terrible suffering; and to his imploring solicitation, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us," Jesus replies, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" and the poor man, in an affecting struggle between faith and doubt, cries out "with tears," sufficiently expressive of the violence of the inward conflict, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Even this staggering, wavering faith, the faith which, weak as it was, still struggled for the victory in an honest mind, was not rejected, and the child was healed. "O thou of little faith," that hearest this, be thou of good courage; try the same experiment; put forth all the strength of thy faith, feeble as it may be; let it wrestle with thy unbelief; let it be exercised in its measure; and thou shalt not be disappointed of the blessing for which thou also art entreating thy Saviour.

But the most singular case is that of the Syro-Phenician woman.—First she utters her loud and plaintive cry, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." No small degree of faith, indeed, was implied in this address

itself; but it was to be severely tried, and more gloriously manifested: —"But he answered her not a word." Next the disciples themselves intercede for her: "Send her away," by granting her request, "for she crieth after us;" she is exceedingly distressed and importunate. But he answered and said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Even these cold words, pronounced in her hearing, did not cast her into despair; for "she came and worshipped him;" and in one of those short bursts of desire from a full heart, which express more than many words, she exclaims, "Lord, help me!" Our Lord's next reply was still more appalling, still more out of his usual manner: "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs;" purposely using the reproachful language of his countrymen to the Gentiles, in order to put her faith to a still sharper test. But even this saying, which must have withered the strongest faith, had it not been secretly sustained by his own influence, only gives rise to an ingenious plea, suggested at once by the strongest desire and the deepest humility: "And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."— Her request was granted. At first sight our Lord seems to yield to importunity; but no, it was to faith: "O woman, great is thy faith;" faith far above the ordinary measure: faith which had to triumph not only over the difficulty of the case, but over the chilling repulsiveness of our Lord's manner and replies; faith whose eagle eye seemed to search every feature of his countenance; which penetrated into his very heart, saw compassion rising there, fixed on that alone, urged the plea with reiterated earnestness, and carried off the blessing.

What, then, were all these instances designed to teach, but the necessity and acceptableness of faith in our case also; to excite an entire and filial confidence in all his people, in all ages, and in all their afflictions and sorrows "of mind, body, and estate?" He is Jesus still; he honours the trust which honours his faithfulness and love, and to this moment "all things are possible to him that believeth." "Trust ye then in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Lastly, we have typical miracles.

I call many of "the signs which Jesus did" typical, because they appear to have been intended to represent and symbolize something higher and greater than themselves, great and illustrious as they were; and because they appear to have been a designed mode of teaching by action.

Our Lord's absolute power over the elements and laws of nature, so often and so illustriously demonstrated in many instances, indicated that the government of the natural world was placed in his hands as Mediator. He rules, he sustains, and he will destroy it.

Devils were subject to his word and name; and this showed forth a doctrine which might well spread joy through the whole earth, that he came to establish a dominion which should first control, and finally subvert, that dark and fatal empire which Satan had established in the human heart, and over the whole world. In the anticipation of this, he rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I beheld, and, lo, Satan as lightning fell from heaven!" and he left an apostle to give the moral application when he was inspired to say, "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

When he was miraculously transfigured before his disciples, he exhibited a most impressive type of that glory into which he was himself about to enter, and into which he purposed, also, to introduce his disciples, that they might behold and partake of it for ever.

When the band came to apprehend him, and he by putting forth but for a moment a supernatural power, and speaking with but a mitigated accent of authority, arrested the arresters, so that "they all went backward and fell to the ground," he showed with what ease he can confound his adversaries; and indicated that more terrible manifestation of his majesty, when the proudest potentates of earth, with all their princes and nobles, shall cry out at his second advent, "Rocks, fall on us! and mountains, hide us!"

When, while in the act of dying, he rent the earth, and opened the graves, so that many of the saints came forth, he gathered the first fruits of his people from the grave, and then exhibited a type of the general resurrection, when "the dead in Christ shall rise first." And the miracle of his own resurrection was not only the grand proof of his mission, but the type and pattern of our triumph over death and the grave. It taught that the same body shall be raised; that "this mortal shall put on immortality;" and that human nature glorified shall become a permanent inhabitant of heaven.

Some useful conclusions may now be drawn from the whole subject.

1. We are reminded of the practical character of the Holy Scriptures.

"These are written that ye might believe;" but many other works were done "which are not written in this book." Enough, however, is recorded for practical uses; the rest are reserved to the revelations of a future state; when, under other circumstances, they will have their practical uses too, though not fitted, or not necessary, for the present. Let us remember that we are rather to improve what is recorded, than repine that not more has been written to gratify our curiosity. There is doubtless a kind wisdom in these reserves, as well as a sovereign authority to which we are to submit. That what would now be a matter of mere curiosity is hidden from us, shows how intent our Saviour is upon our real edification. This short life is the time of action: contemplation is reserved for eternity. It is enough that we may be made "wise unto salvation;" enough that we may attain the "wisdom from above," that which is sufficient to render us "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy;" and that the "Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." If what is written produces these results in us, then it is sufficient for this life: if it produces them not, a larger revelation, a more copious record, would have been vouchsafed in vain.

2. These things are written, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

These are the chief foundations of the Christian faith. "The Son of God" is the Divine designation; "the Christ" is the official name of the Redeemer of the world. As the Son of God, he is Divine; "Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; of one

substance with the Father." This was a claim of his which the Jews, who well enough understood that it involved Divinity, spurned with affected horror, and for which they put him upon his trial as a blasphemer; but "the signs which Jesus did" gave ample evidence that it was no robbery in him to equal himself with God; and these signs were recorded that we might believe this great and fundamental truth, that he is truly God. If we refuse this, we refuse "to honour the Son as we honour the Father;" we give up along with this doctrine, and that necessarily, the doctrine also of Christ's atonement, and thus change the whole foundation of his religion. Most perilous is this opposition to the plainest testimony of God in his word, and to the evidence of Christ's illustrious miracles: it is to stumble with the Jew; like him to fall into deadly error, and, while professing superior revelation, to draw the veil over the heart. Let us beware, lest we also be led astray "by the error of the wicked," and "fall from the steadfastness of our faith in Christ, as the true God, and the eternal life."

But the Son of God is "the Christ:" he became so by assuming our nature, and appearing in our world. This title includes all his offices. He is the anointed Prophet, the anointed Priest, and the anointed King. If we believe on him, therefore, aright, as the Christ, we shall renounce the authority of all other teachers, and sit only at his feet, devoutly, and in entire submission, to learn his words. We shall renounce all other propitiations or pleas of merit, and repose our confidence upon the sacrifice for sin which he made by the shedding of his most precious blood; and through that alone look for the pardon of sin, the sanctification of our nature, and eternal life. We shall practically acknowledge him to be our Lord, as well as our Saviour, and subject ourselves wholly to the rule of his will, and the control of his gracious authority; renouncing all other rules of conduct, and admitting of no appeal from his claim of absolute and eternal right to all we have and all we are.

3. We are taught, that the consequence of a true faith in Christ is life: "That believing ye may have life through his name."

A mere doctrinal faith, however correct, cannot of itself lead to this result; but the personal trust which is exercised by a penitent heart, fully awakened to its dangers, and brought off from every other hope, obtains the life which is promised in Christ Jesus our Lord. The sentence of condemnation is reversed; and spiritual life, the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and giving strength to all holy affections and holy exercises, becomes the subject of present, daily, and growing experience. By this let us try our faith. If we have believed aright, we so live. "We are alive from the dead;" we are "passed from death unto life;" "we live, yet not we, but Christ that liveth in us; and the life that we live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved us, and given himself for us." Nor can that eternal life in heaven, which is promised to believers, follow a faith which brings us not into the enjoyment of this life of grace on earth. This life, in all its stages, from its commencement to its consummation in glory, is obtained only through "the name" of our Saviour; that is to say, through his power, merit, and agency. This is that "name" in which the Gentiles were "to trust." It comprehends all that faith can require in order to exert its strongest confidence; it

is a name of power, and a name of love, as all his mighty works on earth then testified, and still testify to all succeeding ages. In all seasons, when pressed by the weight of guilt, we penitently look to him for pardon; in sickness, sorrow, temptation, or any other adversity, when we fly to him for "grace to help in time of need;" and when, even in the agonies of our mortal struggle, we fix our believing look upon Him who is the resurrection and the life, that "name to sinners dear," that "name to sinners given," shall scatter all our fears, and encourage us to look up with joyful confidence. Thou canst, for thou art all power; and thou wilt, for thou art all love. On this our faith may assuredly rest; and he who so believes "shall never be confounded"

Sermon X.—*The Evils of Ignorance.*

Preached in Mount Tabor Chapel, Stockport, March 9, 1806, for the Benefit of the Methodist Sunday School.

ADVERTISEMENT.

When the following discourse was composed, nothing was farther from the intention of the author than its publication. It was got up for the occasion in haste, and after delivery was thrown aside as useless. To the solicitations of those who heard it, and not to the vanity and presumption of the speaker, it owes its introduction to public notice. A few casual and verbal intimations might have been disregarded; but a written request, signed by a number of very respectable names, was scarcely to be resisted.

Had the discourse been written with a view to publication, both the style and the arrangement would have been altered; but the author is not now at liberty to depart from either. The free and popular style of the pulpit is retained, and nothing important is added or diminished.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," Hosea iv, 6.

Though to the serious observer nothing can be more evident than that the greatest part of the evil and misery which exist in and afflict society must be attributed to the "lack of knowledge," yet persons have not been wanting to stand forth as the champions of ignorance, and to lend their aid to preserve and to extend the empire of darkness. Whether such characters have wished for a monopoly of knowledge to enhance their own importance, or have attempted to keep the human mind in its native state of imbecility, the more effectually to bend the multitude to a compliance with their designs; or whether they are to be considered as ferocious and determined enemies to their fellow men, who, like the beasts of the forest, anxiously wait the return of night to rush out upon the unguarded and unsuspecting, to tear and to destroy;—whether these, or any of these, have been the motives which have led to a conduct at once impolitic and unchristian, it is not my business now to determine. One thing, however, is evident,—that

humanity, reason, and religion, all join in condemning the attempt, and all conspire to prevent its success. Thank God, it cannot be successful. The sun of knowledge is risen, and darts toward the meridian; and though those who "love darkness rather than light" may look out from their murky dens, and hoot at the diffusive radiance, its orb stands too high for them to reach, and its beams spread too wide for them to contract.

How opposite is the conduct of God! Dwelling himself in light, "he hath showed thee, O man, what is good;" he distributes over thy path the illuminations of his wisdom. How contrary was the conduct of Jesus! A Teacher sent from God, he developed the mysteries of his kingdom in a language familiar to the ears of the poor, and by allusions which might convey them to the capacities of the illiterate, that the benefit of his instructions might take a wider range, and the consolations of his religion be universally enjoyed. How different, also, the character and conduct of the true disciples of Jesus! "In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," says an apostle, "ye shine as the lights of the world; holding forth," holding up, displaying "the word of life."

I need not ask my hearers which of these descriptions of character they prefer. Your attendance on the present occasion sufficiently proves that you wish to disseminate knowledge, and to promote the happiness of society, by giving your sanction and support to an institution which proposes these as its immediate objects; and which, under the blessing of God, has already, in a good degree, accomplished them. It is, therefore, with the greatest confidence that I lay before you the subject of this evening's discourse, in the following observations, suggested by the words of our text.

I. Ignorance is destructive: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

II. That to counteract the destructive effects of ignorance, by the dissemination of knowledge, is a work of humanity, of patriotism, and of virtue.

I. 1. Ignorance is destructive of the dignity of man.

"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The faculties of knowledge, reason, judgment, and voluntary determination distinguish us from the beasts that perish, and constitute the true dignity of our nature. "God, our Maker, hath made us to know more than the beasts of the field, and to be wiser than the fowls of heaven." But faculties and powers are of little value till they are brought into exercise, and directed to their proper objects. They are, in this case, like the seed of vegetables cast upon the way-side, which, though it contains the rudiments of the future plant, and possesses the faculty or power of vegetation, exists without end and without use, and must be cast into the earth, moistened by the "fatness of the clouds," invigorated by the rays of the sun, and tended by the assiduous care of the husbandman, before it can bring forth fruit, yield its increase, and answer its designed purpose in the creation of God. So it is with man. Instruction is to him what culture is to the plant; and when he is deprived of its aid, his powers either remain wholly latent, or their exercises, like the produce of the uncultivated plant, are wild and worthless. Life is spent in a vacant stupidity, or

distracted by the ebullitions of a heated and irregular imagination, judgment is perverted by prejudices, and reason subjected to vicious affections. The conduct, which ought to have been the result of judgment and prudence, is impelled by sense and appetite; and he whose powers, had they been rightly improved, would have allied him to angels, and stamped upon his nature the image of God, is reduced to a situation little superior to the irrational part of the creation; the subject of instinct, and the slave of passion.

2. Ignorance destroys the usefulness of man.

"Knowledge is power, and wisdom is better than strength." Knowledge constitutes the whole difference between savage and civilized society; for to the improvement of the mind all nations have owed the improvement of their condition. The comforts and conveniences of life, useful arts, salutary laws, and good governments, are all the productions of knowledge. Ignorance is the negative of every thing good and useful. It is the darkness of night in which man slumbers away an unprofitable and miserable life; a darkness which the rays of knowledge must disperse, before he will awake to exercise, and rise into improvement. Some, it is true, have supposed that it is sufficient for every purpose of national interest, if a few be enlightened, if a few be wise. But let it be remembered, that it is not in the refinements of philosophy, or in speculative science, that society is so much interested, as in the diffusion of that common and useful knowledge which adapts itself to supply the wants, and to ameliorate the condition of man. Then only is it that one individual of a community becomes useful to another; and the whole derives energy and perfection by the combinations of varied genius and united exertion. A very few philosophers are sufficient even for a refined nation; but if knowledge be prevented from spreading itself through the inferior ranks of society, disorganization, savage independence, and barbarian stupidity must be the unavoidable consequences.

But ignorance not only renders the members of a community useless to each other, but opposes, and frequently triumphs over all the endeavours of humane and enlightened individuals. How often have the salutary measures of the patriotic statesman, the discoveries of the sagacious philosopher, the improvements of the ingenious artist, and the benevolent institutions of the disinterested philanthropist been rendered abortive and useless by popular ignorance and popular prejudice! The despotism of ignorance is of the most imperious nature. Its possession of the human mind, at the age of maturity, is firm and resisting; and it is only by a kind of force that knowledge gains admission. Least of all is man willing to admit religious knowledge; and the observation of an infallible discerner of the human heart is justified by facts which are ever occurring: "Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." By this disposition the effects of the Gospel are prevented, and the usefulness of its ministers destroyed. Minds wholly uncultivated are averse to serious thought, and are only conversant with sensible objects. They pass through life occupied only by the present, without reflecting often on the past, or feeling solicitous about the future.—From this springs their aversion to the Gospel; for whoever receives it must become serious and thoughtful. His attention must be thrown

back on the past, that the recollection of sin may produce repentance; and it must also be engaged by the future, that the great objects of eternity may suitably impress his feelings, and regulate his conduct. The mind must be engaged in searching after truth, and the judgment employed in discriminating doctrines. But these exercises, so essential to the promotion and perfection of piety, the ignorant assiduously avoid; and therefore, owing to their own obstinacy and neglect, we preach doctrines which they do not comprehend; duties, of which they discover not the necessity; and propose motives, which their minds are not improved sufficiently to feel. Yes; ignorance destroys the usefulness of man; and they especially who minister in holy things, even after the plainest and most intelligible instructions, are often constrained to cry, "O that they were wise, that they understood this! The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, this people do not consider."

3. Ignorance is destructive of virtue.

Virtue can no more exist without knowledge, than an animal can exist without life. In proportion, therefore, as ignorance prevails in society, virtue is destroyed; and though we cannot say, on the contrary, that in proportion as knowledge is disseminated, virtue will prevail,—for there may be knowledge without virtue,—yet, when the doctrines of religious science are generally known, the elements and materials of virtue are proportionably distributed; and by zeal and assiduity, accompanied by the blessing of God, virtue itself may be produced. In this case we labour in hope; but ignorance presents us with nothing but despair. Ignorant men may possibly be made enthusiasts; they may be made superstitious; but before they can be made rational, steady, and consistent Christians, they must be enlightened.

Consider the nature of virtue. Is it obedience? Obedience must have a law; and the law and its obligation must be known before it can influence; for virtuous obedience is the result of choice, and not of necessity. Does virtue consist in the love and fear of God? His amiableness must be known before we can love him, and his majesty revealed before we can venerate him. Is it Christian virtue to submit to the authority of Christ, as a Teacher sent from God? If it be not from conviction and evidence that we do this, which supposes previous knowledge and deliberation, it would be equally virtuous to call ourselves the disciples of Mohammed, or Zoroaster, or Confucius, as the disciples of Christ. The same may be affirmed of every other branch of virtue. There is no part of religion but stands upon some doctrine; and a doctrine, in the nature of the thing, must be an object of knowledge before it can become an object of rational faith

That ignorance is destructive of virtue, is proved by facts as well as arguments. Search the records of heathenism, and let them testify, that when men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind. They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity." Search the records even of the Christian Church; let them testify, that when the simple worship and the noble doctrines of Christ were corrupted by the superstitions of Jews and pagans; when truth, clear as the day, and luminous as a sunbeam, was exchanged for mummery and mystery, holy absurdities

and sanctified nonsense; when the mind was narrowed up by human creeds, and its exercises restrained by legal penalties; when bishops could not write, and priests scarcely read;—then the light which God had once kindled up in his Church was extinguished; a darkness which might be felt spread over the whole body; and, with the destruction of knowledge, came also the destruction of virtue. Piety was displaced by superstition; bigotry and furious zeal were erected on the ruins of meekness and charity; passions, fierce as hell, and insatiable as the grave, were kindled up in the human breast; and priests and people wallowed together in the sink of the grossest corruption. Facts are striking; thousands might be adduced to prove what has been asserted, that ignorance is destructive of virtue.

4. Ignorance is destructive of happiness.

There is a pleasure in knowledge of a kind more pure and elevated than can possibly be found in any of the gratifications of sense, and for which the latter are but unworthy substitutes. Ignorance is a state, cold and cheerless, in which the finer feelings of the human soul are locked up, and man is deprived of the enjoyment which results from their exercise and perfection. All the pleasures of the uninformed, if pleasures they can be called, arise only from outward objects; and when they are satiated with these, or deprived of the opportunity of resorting to them, having no mental resources, no power of producing enjoyment from their own thoughts and reflections, they sink into a vacancy and torpor, little superior to idiotism itself. This is, perhaps, the reason why such characters, in the intervals of labour, fly from themselves, and fill up their leisure hours with the grossest indulgences of intemperance. Intellectual vigour they do not possess; and the ambition of improvement they do not feel; they shun the company of the wise and sober, where they sink by comparison; and, mingling with the dregs of society, they corrupt by their practice, and destroy by their example.

But of the pleasure which springs from knowledge, and especially from that knowledge which the Holy Scriptures communicate, we cannot conceive too highly. To know God; to contemplate the perfections of his nature, and the wonders of his hand; to become acquainted with that regular and orderly plan by which he governs his creatures; to observe his watchful care and providential regard; to behold the wonders of redemption, the character and undertaking of Jesus, the doctrines he hath taught, the duties he hath enforced, the promises he hath given; to discover the means of salvation, the economy of the invisible world, and the continuance of our own existence in that immortality which is brought to light by the Gospel: these and many other subjects of equal importance, when opened to the mind, not only give pleasure as speculative discoveries, and the solutions of distressing doubts, but, by awakening virtuous sentiments, kindling an ardent and elevated devotion, giving support and reasonableness to hope, and influencing to the conscientious discharge of every religious and moral duty, produce also the testimony of a good conscience, and the favour of God; the present possession of the peace of the Gospel, and the prospect of a future fulness of joy in the presence of God for ever.

On the other hand, let us view the misery of man, when destitute of

this information, and of those principles which it is its natural tendency to fix in the mind.

Regard him as an individual: a slave to his appetites and propensities he debases the man into the brute, blunts the edge of every tender feeling, and hardens himself against every generous emotion. Conscience, so repeatedly insulted, ceases to warn him of danger, and his passions, rendered licentious by indulgence, carry him beyond the power of resistance, to every object they propose, however unlawful and however injurious. The frequency of practice confirms his habits, till they become too imperious to admit of the smallest hope of reformation, and leave us no other prospect than that of a rational and immortal crea ture, formed for communion with his God in this world, and intended to participate his glory in the world to come, filling up the measure of his iniquities, and ripening for destruction.

Consider him as the head of a family: his house was never sanctified to God by prayer and thanksgiving; it is the abode of licentiousness and discord. His children are uninstructed; they grow in perverseness; they mature in iniquity. He is a father without authority, and without honour. He entails upon his offspring the curse of his example, and they, in return, curse his memory.

View him at death. Ah! how dreadful! Agitated by fears, chastised by conscience, alarmed by danger; ashamed of the past, shuddering at the future, without help, and without hope! He is driven away in his wickedness, to await in fearful anxiety, the awful retribution of the last day!

Having pointed out the destructive effects of ignorance, we observe,

II. That to counteract these effects, by the dissemination of knowledge, is a work of humanity, of patriotism, and of virtue.

I know of none who have opposed the communication of knowledge to the lower ranks of society, but the idle and the ignorant, the designing and the wicked. The wise and good have always given their sanction and their aid to popular instruction. They have endeavoured to promote it, as an end, in every point of view, important; and, in the accomplishment of which, not only individual benefit, but government, religion, and morality, are intimately concerned. Wisdom and benevolence have, in this respect, gone about doing good. They have founded colleges, academies, schools, and libraries; they have appointed teachers, from the professor in the university, to the humble, but respectable, retailer of learning in the country village. Something more was, however, still wanting; a great proportion of children remained untaught, and consequently a great part of the community became ignorant and vicious. Sunday schools were projected; and when the trial was made, it was found successful; and experience has now shown that the sanguine expectations of the first patrons of these institutions were well founded.

Their establishment was seasonable. It took place soon after the general introduction of those mechanical improvements into the manufactories of this country, by which employment was given to children, and by which they were consequently confined. This system would certainly have gone very far toward the extinction of the small degree of knowledge which existed in the lower classes, had it not been for the Sunday schools.

The institution was hopeful. Its subjects were children, who, like the softened wax, are capable of taking almost any form, and of receiving almost any impression.

Its objects were important: to teach these children useful knowledge, to instruct them in the duties and doctrines of religion, to habituate them to attend and to respect the worship of God, to supply the wants of one generation, and to prevent those of another; and, by a double blessing, to make those useful members of society, who otherwise would be burdensome and pernicious.

One of these charities you, my auditors, are called upon this evening to support.

It is a work of humanity.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;" and can humanity have a greater triumph than to prevent destruction? Destruction is in all cases an affecting idea; even when it is necessary, that necessity will always be lamented by the feeling mind; but when what is good in itself, and might be useful to others, becomes its subject, how powerfully does it affect our hearts and rouse our exertions!

Suppose a luxuriant harvest, shooting into perfection, waving in the wind, ripening in the sun, and flattering the fond hope of the husbandman by the fair promise of abundance. Should you see this hope blasted, and the whole produce of the fields destroyed by a universal blight, or an overwhelming tempest, you would weep over the desolation, and turn with horror from the scene. Suppose a community, cemented by friendship; inspired by patriotism, obedient to the laws, rising in opulence, in dignity, in character: again, suppose it divided by suspicion, irritated by parties, distracted by violence; its cities depopulated, its fields drenched with the blood of their inhabitants, and anarchy and civil discord completing its destruction. Were you witnesses of this mournful tragedy; were you spectators of these acts of violence, did you behold this "wide-spread ruin," what language could describe the agitation of your feelings?

But what are these, when compared to the destruction of man? What can so affect our feelings, as the soul of man in ruins? This fair temple of God, broken down by vice, and made the abode of every frightful monster and detestable abomination! This efflux of the Divinity, sinking into depravity, wretchedness, and infamy, till it is swept by the besom of destruction, and driven by an avenging God into the pit of everlasting misery!

Instruction may prevent these evils; it is the only means upon which we can depend with any confidence. Permit me then, brethren, to commend the children of the poor to your humanity. By the mysterious dispensations of a Providence which determines the conditions of men, and deals out to them their respective portions of the possessions of the present life, they are born of parents who have not the means of procuring them even a common education; but they are cast upon your beneficence. You take them up. You will not suffer them to enter the world without knowledge to guide them through its difficulties, or principles to secure them against its temptations. Saved from the miseries which positive ignorance never fails to entail upon its wretched subjects, the benefit will be theirs, but the pleasure and reward of communicating it belong to you. Aided by your exertions,

their minds will open to improvement, and to the reception of those principles which will tend to form their characters, and to regulate their lives. By being taught to read, they will have access to the Bible, the Gospel of their salvation. Its truths will enlighten, its precepts will direct, and its promises will comfort them. They will learn to distinguish truth from error, and good from evil. They will feel the force of moral obligation, and perceive the excellencies of religion. You will show them the path of life. Humanity, canst thou feel a higher satisfaction? Men and brethren, can you wish a more luxurious enjoyment?

It is a work of patriotism.

We love our country. It is endeared to us by considerations the most important. It is endeared to us by its government. Property is respected; life is sacred; liberty is secured. It is endeared to us by its privileges. "The Lord hath not dealt so with any nation." It is endeared to us by its religion. Its religion is Christian; the religion of the cross; the religion of love and charity. It is endeared to us by the character of its inhabitants;—mild, humane, friendly, and benevolent. Would to God we could also say, it is endeared to us by its morality! Here we must hesitate. "We are foolish people and unwise, and have ill requited the Lord our God."

To what, then, ought patriotism to be directed? It has secured our civil rights, it has organized our armies, it has rendered our navy invincible, it has extended our commerce, and enlarged our dominion; but there is yet one object to be accomplished; without which well-appointed armies, an invincible navy, extended commerce, and enlarged dominion, will add little to our dignity, our happiness, or our real strength; I mean the correction of our morals. Immorality and irreligion as certainly dry up the resources of a nation, and hasten its downfall, as a worm at the root of the finest plant will cause it to fade, to wither, and to die. Wickedness arms God himself against us; and if he speak "concerning a nation, to pluck up and to destroy," no counsels, however wise; no plans, however judicious; no exertions, however vigorous, can avert the sentence. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and every endeavour to promote it is patriotic. In this view, the preaching of the Gospel is patriotic; the execution of the laws against vice and immorality is patriotic; the support of Sunday schools is patriotic. From the latter, for reasons before assigned, much may be expected toward national reformation. Their good effects are already obvious, and when they shall have become more general, these will be still more striking. Here, then, is a work worthy of your patriotism. Hasten to counteract vice, by the inculcation of virtue; to prevent the destructive effects of ignorance, by instruction; to purify society, by purging the elementary parts of which it is to be composed, from corrupting principles and vicious propensities. These exertions, it is true, will not bring down upon you the smile of monarchs, because they will not notice them; but they will insure the approbation of God. This work will not excite the plaudits of the populace, but the "blessings of them who were ready to perish" will come upon you. Your endeavours will not strike by their splendour, and raise hope by the boldness of enterprise, yet they will not be less effectual; but, like the secret, silent influences of the spring, they will penetrate and

vivify society: "it will bud and blossom, and fill the whole land with fruit."

Finally. It is a work of virtue.

I mean, of Christian virtue. The religion of Christ is a religion of love; its law is the law of kindness, and its exercises the exercises of benevolence; it shuns the parade of grandeur, and the circle of pleasure, and delights in the abodes of misery and the retreats of sorrow; it withdraws the curtains of affliction, and whispers its consolations to the mind, and administers its reliefs to the wants of the dejected sufferer. Upon every institution which has for its objects the amelioration of the condition, and the increase of the civil and moral happiness, of man, it smiles approbation, and commands support. Sunday schools rise immediately out of its spirit, and adapt themselves to its design; they do it honour. What proves that Christianity is of God more forcibly than that it is the express image of Him who is "abundant in goodness and truth?" Does any other religion pretend to be of God? "Show us the image and superscription." Such institutions, I say, honour and recommend Christianity, because they are its effects and distinguishing characteristics. Paganism could boast her solemn temples, her magnificent palaces, her splendid mausoleums, and her triumphal arches, but Christianity displays her alms houses, her hospitals, her asylums, her various charitable societies, and her Sunday schools. Paganism could glory in her heroes, her lawgivers, her philosophers, her orators, and her poets; but Christianity exhibits a Founder who went about doing good, and disciples, in every age, who have devoted their time, their talents, their property, and their influence, to instruct and bless mankind. My brethren, let us tread in their steps; never may we profess Christ, and in works deny him; but, by the lustre of our example, put to "silence the ignorance of foolish men." Let us honour our religion, and prove to all the world, that a Christian is a name which stands for every thing that is dignified and beneficial.

SERMON XI.—*Religious Meditation.*

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide," Genesis xxiv, 63.

THE character of Isaac is one of the most interesting in the Old Testament. He was a striking type of Christ, and an eminent example of piety. As the child of his parents' old age, his birth was preternatural, and so typical of the birth of Jesus, which was preternatural also. His being laid upon the wood by his father, to be offered as a sacrifice at the command of God, was a circumstance which not only proved the faith of the father, but the pious obedience of the son; for Isaac was then in the vigour of youth, (at least, twenty-five years of age,) and able to have resisted his aged parent, had not he himself coincided in the act. Who can reflect upon the innocent youth, bearing the wood up the mountain for the supposed burnt offering, artlessly inquiring of Abraham, "Here is the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offer-

ing?" and when informed that he himself was to be the victim, willingly submitting to the determination of Heaven;—who, I say, can reflect on these things, without at the same time thinking on Him who carried his own cross; and who, in the prospect of a death which he had not personally deserved, said, "Not my will, but thine be done?"

Isaac was not only a type of Christ, but also of the character and privileges of the Church of Christ. He alone was made the heir of his father's substance; and the profane son of the bond woman was cast out. In like manner, none are the heirs of God but those who are of the true spiritual seed; none enjoy the privileges of the Church but those who are holy and harmless; profane mockers and the workers of iniquity have no part in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

Several other similar observations might be made; but our business now is with the moral, and not with the typical, character of Isaac.

The biography of the Scriptures is written in a style peculiar to itself. Here is no laboured description, no tedious narration; all is free, artless, and simple. Yet the sacred writers, by a single stroke of the pen, give us a more correct view of the characters they describe than could possibly be conveyed by the labour of volumes; and it frequently happens that a few words, comprehended in a single line, are the key by which we are let into the recesses of the human heart, and are admitted to contemplate, not only the bold outline, but those minute etchings and shades of character which are so highly interesting to the serious observer.

In this light we may consider our text: "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide." Here, at one glance, we see that Isaac was a man of piety and reflection; that he lived in habits of intimacy with his God; and that, by the intercourse that he held with Heaven, he received those supplies of Divine aid by which he was enabled to subdue sin, and to do the will of Him that sent him into the world. In this delineation of the character of this holy patriarch, we have likewise an example of the wisdom of occasional retirement from the world, for the purpose of religious meditation,—a practice which is absolutely necessary to the production and growth of piety, and consequently to the welfare and happiness of man. To illustrate its nature, and to enforce its observance, let us consider it in reference,

I. To the greatness of its objects;

II. To its moral advantages.

I. In the obscurity of heathenism there was little to invite meditation. The mind might wander in search of truth; but it was only to return fatigued with exertion, perplexed with doubt, and involved in error. Were this the case with us, the subject of this discourse would be very uninteresting; but, thanks be to God, the true light of revelation hath shined upon us; and as the light of the sun discovers the objects of the natural world, so this manifests the hidden things of the spiritual. Doubt gives place to uncertainty, and conjecture to truth.

But it is not only truth that is revealed to us, but important truth.—Not the verification of the idle dreams of the philosopher, the politician, or the moralist, but the establishment of the doctrines which determine the duties, elevate the hopes, and secure the interests, of man. To these meditation gives us access; these it places before the eye, that it may impress them upon the heart.

1. It unfolds the volume of nature.

Nature seen by meditation, through the medium of revelation, assumes a new appearance. It is then no longer an effect without a known cause, nor a means without any visible tendency to an end; but it is recognized as the work of an intelligent Being, displaying, upon a grand and extensive scale, his infinite wisdom and unbounded beneficence.

In the creation of the world, two purposes appear to have been in the view of the almighty Creator. One of these was natural, to provide for the creatures which he designed to inhabit it. Hence, the earth, as the habitation of man, is furnished with every accommodation for his convenience and comfort. The other was a moral one: it was designed that man, marking the Divine wisdom and goodness in the constitution of the world, and the means by which the universal Parent supplies the wants of his dependent family, should yield to God his obedience, and "give him the glory due unto his name;" that such views should not only awaken his admiration, but his devotion; not only excite his wonder, but his gratitude. This latter purpose can only be accomplished by meditation. In that engagement, every object that he beholds leads him up to its almighty Creator, and declares his glory. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are revealed to the pious meditant "by the things which do appear." He reflects upon himself, and in the constitution of his own frame sees the marks of the most exquisite skill, and of almighty power. He extends his thoughts to the earth which he inhabits,—its continents and oceans; its varying climes and changing seasons; its numerous productions, and its myriads of inhabitants; the regularity of the laws by which it is governed; and the harmony of every operation of that energy by which it is supported. In all these he discovers the works of the Lord, and the operation of his hands; and cries, with him of old, who was engaged in the same employment, and inspired with the same sentiments, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches; so is the great and wide sea, wherein are things innumerable. These all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season; thou openest thine hand, and they are filled with good." Lifting up his eyes to the celestial expanse above him, the wonders which this interior part of the temple of the universe discloses confirm these sentiments, and enlarge these conceptions: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Thus it is that meditation unfolds to us the volume of nature, and illuminates the characters in which the Divine glories are therein depicted. What is seen is also felt. Knowledge is enlarged, and devotion kindled.

2. It discloses the principles and ends of the Divine government.

Men of the world see the operations and feel the influences of this government; but they see not its secret springs, neither are able to trace its consequences. Empires rise and fall; wars and tumults shake the nations; princes and honourable men take their stations, and, by counsel in the cabinet, or military prowess in the field, appear to

"ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm." These are the only causes that the greatest part of men see; and to these they wholly refer the good or the evil, the prosperity or the wretchedness, of the world. But he that lives in the practice of holy meditation enters into the counsels of Heaven, and, to a certain extent, is allowed to penetrate the motives of the almighty and universal Governor. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" Where others mark the operation of second causes only, he contemplates the universal influence of the first.—Where they see an agent only, he sees a principal. Where they are bewildered in darkness and uncertainty, he sees a regular and continued plan, which the Deity is carrying on and executing in every age; and though he does not perceive the bearing and connection of every occurrence, because of the limitedness of his powers, yet, from what he has discovered, he can entertain no doubt of the justice, wisdom, and goodness of the Divine government. Clouds and darkness may be round about the Ruler of the universe in the administration of his dispensations; but righteousness and judgment are the pillars which support his throne.

When war afflicts the nations, he beholds not the wrath of man alone, but "the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." When peace spreads her gracious influence, and blesses a nation with prosperity, he looks beyond the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent, to Him "who maketh wars to cease to the end of the earth, who breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder." When men's hearts fail them for fear, and for looking for the things which are coming upon the earth, "his heart is fixed;" for he trusts in the Lord. In his secret retirements he hears a voice, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted in the earth." He bows to the injunction, and hides himself under the shadow of the Almighty.

Such are the opinions which habitual meditation will teach us respecting the administration of the affairs of the world; nor will our views be less correct when we contemplate that particular government which God extends over individuals; for he that governs the world collectively, governs every individual separately. To trace the operations of the Divine wisdom and goodness in the events of our past lives, is one of the most pleasing exercises of religious meditation. Let the mercies bestowed upon careless men pass by them unimproved, and when past, be forgotten for ever; let them be equally insensible to the chastisements of the Almighty, and, though they have been afflicted, give no glory to the God of heaven; we, brethren, in retiring from the world, in recalling the events of life, shall behold, not only the gifts, but the Giver of them; not the rod only, but Him who hath appointed it. We shall discover, that the end of every dispensation hath been our good; that the Divine Being hath watched over us with the solicitude of the tenderest parent, and, by a secret yet powerful energy, hath been restraining us from sin, moulding our hearts to virtue, and preventing our destruction. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to keep back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living."

3. It reveals the dispensations of grace.

It is true that these are recorded in the New Testament, and that

they are publicly taught; but public records and public teaching can only be made effectual to our instruction by our own meditations. The former furnishes the matter, and the latter arranges, examines, and applies.

It is very probable that the subject of Isaac's meditation in the field, at eventide, might be the method of man's salvation, in that age partly revealed. Abraham, it is said, "saw the day of Christ afar off and was glad." Sacrifices of animals were then in use, and, by those, the vicarious sufferings of the Messiah were prefigured. But Isaac enjoyed additional means of information. As the exclusive heir of his father, it was from the appropriated line of his posterity that He was to spring in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed; and the circumstance of himself having been intentionally sacrificed, but delivered by the immediate interposition of God, was such a representation of the death and resurrection of his great Antitype as could not fail to make a very deep and lasting impression upon his mind. This was the favourite subject of meditation with all the Old Testament saints. "The Gospel was preached unto them as well as unto us;" and though the medium was too dim for the object to be seen very distinctly through it, yet enough was discovered to engage the attention and to affect the heart. David was so interested in it that he says, "In thy law do I meditate day and night." Not in the moral law only, but in the Levitical, that, by an attentive perusal of the shadow, his conception of the substance might become more correct and extensive. In the same way were the prophets affected. Thus the apostle: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

But that which is perfect is now come, and that which is in part is done away. The veil is removed, and "we all with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." What a subject for meditation! "Which things the angels desire to look into." On the one hand, we shall discover man, corrupted by sin and laden with guilt, without strength and without hope: on the other, the striking character of God, inflexibly just, yet infinitely merciful;—placable, though incensed; reconcilable, though offended;—possessing the right as well as the power of making us the awful monuments of his vengeance, by an utter and eternal destruction from his presence and glory; yet arranging a plan for our redemption, and "devising means that his banished ones be not expelled from him." Mediating between these two parties, Jesus, the High Priest of our profession, is seen standing before the throne of God. It pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief; and he, by the power of love unparalleled, love stronger than death, "became obedient to death, even the death of the cross."—Having purchased, by that meritorious act, the pardon and salvation of man, for the suffering of death he is crowned with glory, and elevated to the government of the universe, and the headship of the Church, that he may accomplish his designs of love, in bringing many sons to glory. From the heaven which he inhabits he hath sent us the news of salvation;—a Gospel, the truth of which hath been attested by signs, and wonders, and many mighty works, and the blessings of which con

tinue to be applied by the Holy Spirit;—a Gospel, which, in a far higher sense than could be attached to the law, is "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths;" instructing our minds, purifying our hearts, directing our lives, uniting us to God, and making us heirs of immortal life.

Meditation is to all these truths, which shine around us in their meridian splendour, what the opened eye is to the light; it admits them into the understanding as objects of knowledge, and it applies them as the spring and the rule of practice. For neither the extent of them, as doctrines, can be seen, nor the advantages of them, as promises, be enjoyed, until they become the subjects of serious reflection and habitual devotion.

4. It draws aside the veil of mortality, and directs our view into a future and eternal state.

In our commerce with the world, the things which are visible almost exclusively occupy our thoughts, awaken our desires, and excite our cares. But when we retire to meditate, nothing is more likely to strike us than the mortality of our present existence. Both from observation and experience, "the living know that they must die;" yet where is the creature that clings not to life, that dreads not the extinction of existence? It is natural to man to wish for the continuance of being; it is a principle which cannot be separated from his nature. "If in this life only we had hope, we should be miserable;" but life and immortality are enlightened by the Gospel. The resurrection of Jesus is the pledge of ours; and his having entered into heaven as the Forerunner of his people, affords us an indefeasible right to an existence beyond the grave, glorious and eternal. To this world of felicity every good man, in his meditations, aspires. Wearied in life, he contemplates with rapture his approaching rest. Pressed with sorrow, and smarting under affliction, he finds a powerful relief in the prospect of a state of unmixed joy and unchangeable happiness. Without possessions in this world, or at least without any on which he does place his affections, he delights to review his title to those which are undefiled and fade not away. Groaning in a tabernacle, beneath a load of infirmity and imperfection, he then rejoices in the reversion of "a house not made with hands," a state of perfection and love, a permanency of felicitous condition. And while hope sweetly expatiates in the fair prospect of so much good, faith gives a present subsistence to the things hoped for, a foretaste of the felicities, and an antepastal enjoyment of the blessings, of heaven.

But it cannot be denied, that futurity presents us with prospects gloomy, as these are bright; dreadful, as these are glorious. The same Hand that has rent the veil which hid the holiest place from our view, has thrown open the iron doors of destruction, and discovered the pit of ruin, the miseries of the damned, the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever. Yet, awful as this discovery is, it is of important consequence in the meditations of even a good man. Fear, as well as hope, is a powerful motive, and, in many cases, accomplishes that which hope cannot. The hearts of men are not, in this respect, "fashioned alike," consequently, cannot be equally acted upon by the same motive. While some will give way to the mild beams of mercy others must be broken by terror; and, in many, it is by the joint ope-

ration of both, that the desired effect must be produced. Why the miseries as well as the felicities of futurity are revealed, is very obvious; the one is to encourage piety, the other to deter from vice.—Such views will be produced in our minds by meditation; let us, therefore, be warned. While we contemplate the effect of sin, let us learn to avoid the cause. While we view the awful punishment of carelessness and sloth, let us "watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Under this head of the discourse we shall advance no more, only observe, that the topics introduced are very general, and will, upon due consideration of them in retirement, branch out into so great a number and variety, that we shall never want for something new to invite our thoughts, and fix our attention. From this inexhaustible mine of religious truth, a treasure may always be procured to repay our labour and to enrich our souls. Proceed we then to consider meditation,

II. In reference to its moral advantages.

1. By meditation we shall acquire a competent knowledge of our own hearts.

Nothing can be more evident than that most men press through life without knowing themselves. Vice makes a rapid progress in their hearts, but that progress is not marked. The seeds of evil are suffered to grow and to overspread the mind; while they remain ignorant of the extent of their produce. Nor can it be otherwise, while all their time and their thoughts are occupied by considerations foreign both to religion and morality. The heart of man is deceitful above all things; and to pursue vice through all its folds and labyrinths will call for attentive observation and serious study. But study supposes retirement; and study in retirement is what we mean by meditation. It is then that we can leisurely and seriously pursue our conduct to its principles, and our actions to their motives; that we can trace the tenor of our thoughts and wishes, and determine how far they run in the line of duty, and where they break off from it. As meditation brings before us the great objects of religion, the very act itself will try the temper of our minds. We shall then be able to determine to what extent religious objects engage our hearts, and how far our aversion to them proves the carnality of our minds by the enmity or indifference that we feel to them; whether the relish of our souls be formed to things Divine and heavenly, or our affections be carried away to those of the world. In a word, as it is by the rules of God's word alone that we can truly estimate our characters, so to prove ourselves by it will be one principal part of our business in retirement. By this we shall not only discover our natural depravity and weakness, but be able to determine the degree of our Christian attainments, to prevent self deception, to gather suitable matter for our prayers, to encourage what is good, and to amend what is evil.

Such are the important discoveries which meditation makes in the human heart. To neglect it, is to neglect the means of obtaining that great branch of knowledge, the knowledge of ourselves,—the first attainment of religion, and the foundation on which the whole superstructure is raised.

2. It will enable us to form a just estimate of the world.

It is an axiom which we ought never to forget, that things are to be valued and pursued according to their real worth and importance. But we find that too many of our fellow creatures, neglecting this rule, devote that attention and ardour to trifles which ought to have been reserved for things of the most valuable consideration. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Such inconsistencies we are not guilty of in the affairs of life, nor should we be in those of religion, if we had all duly apprehended the value of the "things which are seen, which are temporal, and the things which are not seen, which are eternal." But how shall we judge of the world? As we would judge of a large painting. Not when we are so close to it that the eye can take in but a part; but at a convenient distance, where the different attitudes, relations, and expressions of the figures and objects may be most strikingly discovered. In retirement we place ourselves at this convenient distance from the world, and through "the loop-holes of retreat, may see the stir of the great Babel and not feel the crowd." Should we estimate the world in the ardour of pursuit, the excess of enjoyment, or the chagrin of disappointment, our estimate would be false. But if we would calculate accurately, we must go, with Isaac, into the field at even-tide, when the heat of the day has subsided, and the bustle of exercise is past. Then the mind, tranquil as even-tide itself, its passions hushed to silence, cool and collected, will see clearly and reason justly. Then the world, stripped of the embellishments with which our hopes and wishes had decorated it, will be seen as it is in itself; and, when thus seen, must sink in our estimation to its proper level. We shall conclude that, though it is worthy of our hands, it is not deserving of our hearts; that, notwithstanding we may lawfully avail ourselves of its advantages, it must not fetter our minds; that while it calls for a certain portion of care and exertion, these must be consistent with the principles and exercises of religion; that all worldly joy and sorrow must be moderate, because its good is fleeting, and its evils transitory; and that the best and most vigorous exercises of our powers must be reserved for those spiritual objects which are stable in their natures, and eternal in their duration.

3. Meditation promotes holiness.

As the architect, before he can erect an extensive edifice, must, in private, first prepare his plan; and as the philosopher, before he can enlighten the world with his discoveries by study, must first digest and arrange his system; so, before we can come forth into life as patterns of holiness, and skilful champions of the truth, we must, by meditation, have imbibed the principles of religion, and submitted our hearts to its influence. Retirement and reflection are constantly avoided by the vicious; for they are so opposite to every thing that is evil, and so friendly to the promotion of goodness, that none but those who sincerely desire to live to the glory of God will habitually retire to meditate. It is a practice that will produce repentance, by setting "our sins before us, our secret sins in the light of our countenance." It will humble the mind, and destroy its love to sin. It will produce fear and love toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It places the soul under the influences of the Divine Spirit, who transforms and renews it in the image of Christ, by "purging away the leaven of wickedness,"

and implanting therein all the principles and graces of the Christian character. Thus changed, we shall come from retirement, as Moses from the mount, shining with the lustre of spiritual "glory and beauty." Our loins will then be girt with truth, and our "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Armed at all points, we shall be able to withstand the attacks of our enemies, and the seductive influence of the world; and, in reality, as well as profession, shall be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

But that we have attended to this duty will not be sufficient. Would we "grow in grace," we must persevere in doing it. We ought regularly to come from the secret exercises of meditation into the world; and we ought to go from the world into retirement, there to wipe off any stain we may have contracted, to repair the breaches that temptation may have made in our souls, and, by prayer and faith, to obtain grace to enable us henceforward to escape the corruptions of the world, and the solicitations of sin.

4. Meditation leads to a union with God.

"I will dwell in them, and walk in them. I and my Father will come in to him and abide with him." But when are these words verified? Particularly in the hour of religious retirement. It is true, that a good man lives under a constant sense of the Divine presence; yet worldly engagements, however moderate, in some degree divert the mind, and prevent that fulness of communication which these promises lead us to expect. In the world there is the "earthquake, the whirlwind, and the storm; but God is not there." He reveals himself to his people by "a still small voice;" a voice which meditation opens our ears to receive and our hearts to feel. Then he makes that heart his throne, which is prepared by suitable sentiments to receive him; it is then that he gloriously descends into the soul, which is elevated by devotion to meet him. His light and love are shed abroad in the heart, its darkness scattered, its sorrows chased away, and a Divine quickening influence animates and directs every power. How pleasingly awful are the secret retirements of the pious! "Surely," says Jacob, "God is in this place; how awful is the place!" David calls it, "abiding under the shadow of his wings." It is the cleft of the rock in which God placed Moses when he made all his goodness pass before him. It is the mount of transfiguration, where the disciples, beholding the glory of their Master, cry out, "It is good for us to be here."

Would you then, my brethren, enjoy that highest privilege of human beings,—to walk and talk with God as a man with his friend, nay, to be "joined to the Lord, and become one spirit with him,"—retire, with Isaac, to meditate; keep your appointments with God sacred: he will not fail to meet you. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Finally. Meditation prepares us for heaven.

To prove this, nothing more is requisite than to review what has already been advanced. We have seen that meditation is the means of obtaining knowledge; that it weans our hearts from the world, and places the affections on things above; that it produces repentance and

holiness; that it is the spring of an ardent and elevated devotion; and, by strengthening and purifying the mind, enables us to do those things which are pleasing in the sight of God, and to "lay up a good foundation against the time to come." Those that live in the habit of an exercise so morally productive as this, must be rapidly preparing for the kingdom of glory: they perform those conditions on which the promise of it is suspended; they grow familiar with those objects which will be the foremost to engage the mind in a state of future felicity; and they are forming their characters to the model of those who are already placed in the possession of it. How long the stay of such in the present world will be protracted, we must leave to God; but the time will occur when "the Master shall come and call for them."—Happy is that servant, who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing: to him it shall be said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Such are the important advantages which will arise from occasional retirement from the world to meditate; a duty, to the neglect of which we may fairly attribute the depravity of the wicked, and the ignorance and instability of many professors of religion, and to the performance of which we scarce need any other motives than the practice of the best and wisest of men, and its evident connection with the perfection of religion in our hearts. We may all live in the practice of it; for, however urgent the calls of business and other engagements of life, if we regularly distribute and carefully redeem our time, we shall not want opportunity. Leisure we all have; and good sense alone will tell us, that it is better to employ it in this manner, than in dancing the giddy circle of pleasure, or in the yawnings of sloth. Brethren, time is short, but it is infinitely valuable. Our moments leave us in a succession awfully rapid. As they pass, let us stamp them with our virtues, that, at last, the retrospect of life may be pleasing, and the prospect of eternity glorious.

SERMON XII.—*St. Paul's Confidence in the Gospel.*

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith," Romans i, 16, 17.

THIS epistle was written from Corinth, one of the most remarkable scenes of St. Paul's ministerial success; but which could not satisfy that sanctified and noble ambition which was always urging him on to new labours and more extended triumphs. He had heard of the flourishing state of Christianity at Rome; and although that work had been effected by other instruments, yet he rejoiced in this new and illustrious proof of the efficacy of the Gospel in the seat of empire,—in that grand temple and fountain of superstition, where pomp and power lent their patronage to the errors which deluded, and the vices which corrupted almost the whole world of civilized men. He was

too deeply interested in the honour of his Master, and in the salvation of the souls purchased by his blood, to admit the base feeling of envy toward those on whom God had conferred the fame of raising up a Church in the celebrated metropolis of the world; he cherishes the work in his sympathies, as though he himself had been its author, and calls God to witness, that without ceasing he made mention of the believers there in his prayers; verse 9. After, however, he had longed to see them, he had made request that he might have a prosperous journey to them, by the will of God. But he had been hindered by that very will of God in subjection to which he had made the request. The apostles were not in their own hands; and that peculiar leading of the Spirit, under which they were, appears to have been vouchsafed often by sudden and unlooked-for impulses, changing their plans, and countervailing their most deliberate purposes. This is one of the proofs that they were under that inspiration which they professed. A real fanatic turns those impressions which he fancies to be from God into the service of his own will and inclinations. Among the apostles, both these were overruled: and, as the true servants of Jesus Christ, they learned to live not to themselves but to him, and to acknowledge that, in a work which respected the deep and comprehensive designs of God's mercy to the world, not even spiritual and experienced men were, of themselves, competent judges either of time or place. St. Paul was permitted to visit Rome, but at a future time; his journey was not to be that prosperous journey which he requested, but a journey of toils, and perils, and suffering; he was to enter Rome as an ambassador, but as "an ambassador in bonds,"—a prisoner, and not free. So differently, often in the mode, does God bring about those purposes and plans of ours which he is pleased to accomplish!

The reason why St. Paul so earnestly wished to visit the Roman Church was, that he might impart unto them "some spiritual gift," make them sharers of that more perfect knowledge of evangelical truth with which he had been endued, impress upon them all those motives to fidelity and constancy which his example, his zeal, and "the wisdom given to him," could supply, and, by his preaching to the pagan part of the population, might have fruit among them also, as among other Gentiles. Directed, however, by the Holy Spirit into other and distant fields of labour, he endeavours to impart this "spiritual gift" to them through this important epistle; a writing equally adapted to the instruction and edification of both Jews and Gentiles, of which the Roman Church was composed; and of standing, unaltered value and efficacy to all classes of men to this day. It is, indeed, the grand light of the Church on the all-concerning subjects of our justification before God, the privileges secured to us by faith in Christ, and practical holiness in its various branches. Happy is he who reads, understands, and applies it; to him shall that "spiritual gift" spoken of by St. Paul be imparted; and he shall be "established."

Our text expresses St. Paul's readiness to "preach the Gospel at Rome also," as he had done in so many other distinguished cities of the ancient world; a readiness which sprang from his entire confidence in the truth, the excellency, and the power of the Divine system which he was charged to teach. The grounds of his confidence we propose briefly to exhibit; and we shall find them laid partly in the points

stated in the text, and partly suggested in preceding verses of this introductory portion of the epistle.

I. The first consideration from which this confidence must have arisen, was the certainty of his own call from heaven to be a teacher of that religion which he had once persecuted.

You know his own statement of the case, as twice given, when put upon his defence for preaching that Jesus was the Christ; and the effect so corresponds with the cause to which he attributed it, that it is impossible you should discover for it any other rational solution. There were no predilections in his mind in favour of the new religion; his feelings, his passions, his judgment, were all opposed to it. A proud Pharisaic formalist has always been found farthest from the kingdom of God. His resistance to Christianity was not merely passive; his alarms for what he then believed to be the truth were excited by the spread of this new heresy, and the ardour of his feelings rose even to persecuting fury; "he breathed out threatenings and slaughter" against the saints, and had looked on with savage joy while the first martyr was stoned into the glories of a kingdom which he had then no eye of faith to discern. To relax the bigotry, to quench the fury, to turn the tide of such a mind, and that suddenly, some great power must be supposed; and a power which, to his conviction, must have been decidedly supernatural, since it bound him to sacrifice fame, wealth, and friends, and to embrace reproach, poverty, and suffering, and so "separated him unto the Gospel of God," verse 1, as to demand an entire renunciation of the world. The only assignable cause is the true one; the vision of Christ vouchsafed to him on the way to Damascus,—that vision which first humbled and then exalted; which prostrated him at the foot of Him who had power to avenge upon him all the wrongs done to Christ through his people; but which closed by sending him as a witness and apostle "to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." That hour of terror and of joy could not be forgotten: Moses might as soon have doubted of his commission, received amidst the thunders of Sinai, as St. Paul of his, confirmed at once by the external miracle, and the no less a miracle within,—the sudden change of his whole heart from unbelief to faith, and from enmity to love. Satisfied, therefore, of his heavenly apostleship, he was ashamed of his commission no where, not even at Rome; and his very confidence, which could only be the result of his own faith, gives also confidence to ours. His conversion is one of those signal miracles by which our religion has been for ever ratified.

II. The confidence professed in the text was supported also by his thorough conviction of the Divinity of the Author of the Gospel of which he was thus made a minister. In his view, the doctrine which he was "separated" to teach was "the Gospel of God," not only as to the Father from whom the grace came as its fountain, but as to his Son Jesus Christ by whom it was administered, and who had committed it to him. "He was made of the seed of David," according "to the flesh;" and so bore in his human nature and descent that proof of Messiahship which accorded with the prophecies; but he was also "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Thus does the apostle proclaim his faith in Him whom in his fol-

lowers he once so virulently persecuted as an impostor. He not only proclaims him to be Messiah in the sense of the degenerate Jews of that day, who, departing from the faith of their ancestors and their Scriptures, expected no greater than a human Messiah. He was that human Messiah "according to the flesh;" but "according to the Spirit of holiness," his higher and Divine nature, that which was opposed to what he was "according to the flesh," he was the Son of God, that glorious hypostasis in the Godhead, who was "of the Father" by an eternal filiation, and thus was at once second in order, and equal in majesty and perfection; a Being capable at once of being sent to redeem the world, and of infinite resources to accomplish the stupendous work. Such a Messiah was promised in the writings of the holy prophets; and Jesus had been declared to be this Messiah by his resurrection from the dead, which authenticated all the claims he had ever made on earth.

The Gospel, then, according to the apostle, had an author in the fullest sense of the word Divine: this was the ground of the apostle's confidence in it. He could not hesitate to put it into comparison with any religious system which imperial Rome, the pupil of Greece, could exhibit as its competitor. It had its philosophic schools, each boasting of its founder and master; it had its popular mythology, reaching into the obscurities of antiquity; but there was nothing which bore upon it the impress of God, nothing which had that authority upon which human hope could rest. The mythology was ever acknowledged to be ridiculous and corrupting imposture, by every sober and rational man; and the philosophy had no basis but the opinions of men, contradicting themselves and each other. Triumphantly as he had led on the march of Christianity in other parts of the Gentile world, he could not be ashamed of it at Rome,—encircled not by the changeful, flitting meteors of human science, often falsely so called, but with the effulgence of celestial truth; towering above all in the majesty of her Divine Founder; accredited by the seals of prophecy and miracles; breathing peace in her promises, and commanding awe by the sanctions of an unveiled eternity. He knew that it was from its author, God, and that God its author was always with it. This was the ground of his confidence; and it is the sure ground of ours.

"Christ is God!" What a glory is thus given to his Gospel! There are who reject this grand, this fundamental truth, in opposition to those very Scriptures which they profess to receive; but how different is their Gospel from ours! Their Christ is man; ours, God made man. The affection of their Christ is the benevolence of a creature; of ours, the love of God, to be measured only by the stoop of his condescension from heaven to earth; from the heights of glory to the depths of agony; from the adorations of angels to the scoffs of mortals. Their teacher, though inspired, is but a human prophet: "God, who in time past spake to our fathers by the prophets," thus marking an inferior dispensation, "hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son." The death of Christ to them is the testimony of a martyr; to us, the seal of an everlasting covenant of grace by sacrifice. His resurrection is to them a proclamation chiefly of his innocence: to us he rises as the Resurrection and the Life, quickening himself, and showing that he has power to "quicken whomsoever he will." To them his ascension is

nothing; it terminates in himself: to us he ascends as the High Priest, to open the holy places to us by the sprinkling of his blood, to give access to the mercy seat in heaven, ever to live to make intercession for us, to bring many sons to glory; to take "the key of shades and of death," to open so that none can shut, to shut so that none can open. To them Christ is gone, and they are left orphans: to us he is ever present; for "where two or three meet in my name, I am in the midst of them;" and, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Of such a Gospel, issuing from, and glorified and energized by, his Divinity, we are not, and never shall be, ashamed.

III. The confidence of the apostle would naturally be confirmed by the effects already produced by Christianity in Rome, of which he makes mention in the preceding verses with grateful joy: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."

That which he had seen in other places, resulting from the publication of the Gospel, he had heard of at Rome; all the Christians who had visited the metropolis from every other Church had returned to bear witness to the grace of God as manifested in that city; and thus, throughout the whole empire, so extensive as to be sometimes denominated "the world," their "faith" had been spoken of with admiration. Here was another reason for the apostle's glorying in the religion of which he was made a minister; and it was one on which he might meet, without shrinking, all the subtleties of sophists, as well as the shafts of satire, and the frowns of authority.

Religion itself is a practical thing; and its actual effects, when received, are its true test. He was not going to Rome to propose it to the acceptance of the inhabitants for the first time. By whomsoever first introduced, it had been for some years working its own mighty moral changes; and had raised up a Church there, whose faith, in those primitive times, had obtained no approving celebrity, if it had not saved its professors from sin; if it had not been "faith working by love,"—the very reverse of the faith of that Church fallen, and equally spoken of and felt throughout the world as faith working by "hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." He could therefore refer to the effects produced as forcibly as to the argument in favour of the Gospel; and had not only to exhibit the theory, but its triumphs of salvation, and its fruits of holiness.

And here the Christian preacher, or the private Christian, may stand upon the highest ground, and say, after the lapse of centuries, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." True, we know that superstition, and error, and persecution, and bad morals, the effects of corruptions of the Gospel, have been charged upon Christianity itself; which is like charging the blights, and other injuries done to the harvest by the clouds and damps and storms of a turbid atmosphere, to the sun, which, though hidden, shines unclouded in the pure heaven of a higher region. True, the enemies of the Gospel once loved to contrast the virtues of pagan with the vices of Christian nations; but the better knowledge of the heathen world which has been of late years acquired, has disappointed the malignant argument, and proved that Christianity, in its worst forms, is superior, in moral influence, to the best systems of heathen wisdom, or heathen superstition. When, however, we

speak of Christianity, we do not speak of that which has so profanely usurped that venerable name. What have we to do with the idolatries of the Roman, or the superstition of the Greek, Church. Our Bible spurns them; and, as the proof of this, they have spurned the Bible, as well knowing that its testimony must be silenced before they could pass off their cheats and impostures upon the world, under the sanction of the Divine system of religion which it contains. Of the gospel of antichrist we might be ashamed; not of the Gospel of Christ himself, the Son of the living God. No; wherever that has come, whether it has broken partially through the gloom of darkened Christendom upon particular nations, or been as the first dawn of morning light rising upon the long night of pagan countries, the effect has been the same: from the soil sterile as to good, and fertile only in weeds and poisons, have sprung up "the fruits of righteousness;" and "the faith" of British and American Christians, nay, of converted negroes, Hottentots, Indians, and the inhabitants of the distant islands of the Pacific Ocean, has been "spoken of throughout the world," with feelings as grateful and triumphant as those which in the first ages were excited and inspired by the pure and fruitful faith of the Church of Rome in its virgin purity. Yes, when we contemplate on so large a scale, and through a portion of time so vast, its beneficent operations on the bodies and the souls of men, their civil, social, and religious state, upon the intellect and upon the passions, upon the conditions of this life, and the hopes of another; when we think of the manliness it has given to intellect, the power it has infused into conscience, the settledness to religious opinions on all fundamental points of doctrine, the happy families it has created, the moral progress into which it has impelled the most degraded nations, the noble examples of wisdom, purity, and heroic suffering it has set up, the mercy it has shed through society, and the "number which no man can number" with which it has colonized the regions of immortality themselves, we may each respond to the apostle, and say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

IV. A fourth ground of his confidence is expressly stated in the text. "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Here the apostle brings the efficiency of the Gospel down to individual experience. It is not upon communities and nations only that it operates beneficially, but upon "every one that believeth;" and that, not only "to the Jew," to whom it was first, in all places, proposed, "but also to the Greek;" the external circumstances of man neither cutting them off from salvation, nor obstructing the efficacy of this grand saving institution.

When the apostle lays it down as the ground of his glorying in the Gospel, that it is the power of God unto salvation, he silently contrasts it with every other religion known or received among men, and triumphs over them. This is power, they are weakness and insufficiency; this saves, they leave man in sin and danger still. Under all the forms of paganism, under all the systems of heathen philosophy, the world became still more corrupt; nor did their most devoted disciples exhibit any proofs of being saved. Salvation was what man needed, but which they all failed to bestow; those who most carefully followed their regimen or applied their medicines, grew but worse under the treatment,

and were themselves therefore the proofs, that every process of moral healing known in the world was utterly powerless. But this, says the apostle, has "power;" it has Divine power; it is "the power of God unto salvation."

Nor ought the grandeur of this thought to escape us. The power of God was familiar to man. In the order, and in the disorders of nature, its steadfast laws, and its conflicting elements, it was alike manifested; in the punishment of sin, in the acts of daily providence, in the rolling changes and whirl of empires. Here, however, the power of God has a new manifestation: it is power engaged only in works of mercy,—mercy to the souls of men; the power of God embodied in Christianity to save and to bless. Behold, then, the power of God as it connects itself with the Gospel, and works out its gracious effect by it, as its instrument.

In the Gospel, the power of God is employed to illuminate; it is light shining in darkness, and carrying with it its own demonstration, so clear, so bright, so piercing, that all who attend to its doctrine at all have a secret, unconquerable conviction that it is from God; and it thus creates a standard of judgment and a conscience, from which men, even with all their efforts, can scarcely ever free themselves.

In the Gospel the power of God is employed to quicken. Man, dead by nature, now lives. His awakened fears, his restless desires after God, his impatience to be free from sin, his sighs who never sighed for sin, his tears who never wept for sin, his voice of pleading prayer, —for, "behold, he prayeth,"—all prove that a strange change has passed upon him; he awakes, he lives, at the voice of that word which from its efficacy, proves itself to be the voice of God.

In the Gospel the power of God is employed to comfort. It does this by the conveyance upon our believing of a powerful and unequivocal testimony of the Spirit of God to our spirits, that we are now the reconciled, accepted children of God; that "Christ loved me" as an individual, and "gave himself for me;" that I have received "the adoption of a son," and, if a child, am therefore "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ." This is "the strong consolation" enjoyed by "the heirs of promise" spoken of by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews; and it is that which, wherever the Holy Spirit abides as the Comforter, neither the sorrows of life, nor the pains of death, can overcome and destroy.

In the Gospel the power of God is employed to regenerate. "Created anew unto good works, that ye might walk in them." "Such were some of you," appeals St. Paul to the personal experience of the Corinthians; "but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified."

In the Gospel the power of God is employed to sustain. The passive power thus given to man, the power to suffer, is as illustrious as any other of its displays in the heart and experience of man. And here I refer not to the power to suffer reproach, to be martyred for truth, and not accept deliverance on terms which would dishonour Christ and defile the conscience. I know it may be said, that philosophy may defy scorn; but even here, I ask, Will philosophy teach me to love the scorner?—That natural heroism may submit with dignity to unjust death; but will it excite me to pray for the murderer? It is, however, to ordinary instances that we refer; ordinary as to frequency

extraordinary indeed as to character;—to the thousands of silent sufferers now in pain, poverty, and oppression, who, strengthened by this mighty power, are meekly dumb under the hand of God, heavy as it may press upon them; they are "silent, for it is the Lord's doing."

In the Gospel the power of God is glorifying. It shall raise the body from the humbling ruins of its mortality, to the glory of a deathless life; and it has already placed disembodied spirits of saints "whom no man can number," in the beatifying vision of God. It is thus "the power of God unto the" eternal "salvation of every one that believeth."

V. The last ground on which the confidence of the apostle, as to the Gospel, rested, is not the least: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."

This is indeed the reason why the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation: it is so because it contains a revelation of the terms on which God forgives sins, or justifies men by pardon who are actually guilty. Or, if this clause be considered as exegetical of the former, then we are to understand by it, that the Gospel is a Divine institution, by which men are saved through the forgiveness of their sins by faith in an atonement which demonstrates the righteousness of God in this very exercise of mercy.

This is indeed the grand and peculiar glory of the Gospel. The immutable principle of the Divine government is righteousness: "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." From this principle he never does, and never can depart. To grant mercy to the guilty is a perfectly voluntary act; and he has shown that it is so by passing by the fallen angels, and leaving them unredeemed, while he regarded the low estate of man. A righteous government is the result of moral necessity: God may be merciful; but he must be just.

The only way in which he could, therefore, be at once just and merciful, it is obvious, must be by the provision of an adequate atonement for sin, so that all the ends of a righteous government, the character of which is to uphold authority by the punishment of all offences, might be answered. For this reason no other system could be saving: none of them had the true atonement; and it was this which so exalted Christianity above them all, however venerable for antiquity, or commended by authority, as to make it the just subject of the apostle's glorying. What had they to offer as a propitiation for sin? They had "the blood of bulls and of goats," like the Jews; but among heathens they were neither true atonements, nor the types of the true atonement. They neither possessed efficacy in themselves, nor directed to that beyond themselves which did possess efficacy; and this first requisite being wanting, all that was added of pomp and splendour to their religion could not supply the want, and only served to exaggerate and amplify what was of no value. It could not reconcile man to God; and all this therefore was empty and delusive ceremony. In none of its parts could it plead Divine appointment; and, as to the whole array of its temples, sacrifices, festivals, sacerdotal orders and processions, it was doubtless said by Him who has the right to appoint his own propitiation and his own worship, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

But of the doctrine of which St. Paul was the teacher, he affirms,

"Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:" that is, it reveals a righteous method by which sin is forgiven by God, through faith in the authorized and accepted sacrifice offered by his Son; and it reveals this to the faith of men, in order that they may believe and live; "as it is written, The just shall live by faith:" so that the Old Testament bears witness to the New on this all-important doctrine. Thus it is that the Gospel throws open the gates of salvation to the guilty, and at once secures, by its Divine atonement for sin, the honours of the Divine government; and, by its conditions of repentance and faith, themselves performed in the strength of a Divine influence, places its salvation within the reach of the most helpless and the most unworthy.

Such were the reasons which banished all shame from the breast of the apostle, and made him ready to declare this heavenly doctrine at Rome also with all "boldness and confidence."

Brethren, this same Gospel demands from us the most devout acknowledgment.

Preachers, animated with the same spirit as St. Paul, have in all succeeding ages been raised up to publish the truth among pagans, or to reassert its ancient doctrines in the fallen and corrupt Church. In that pure form in which alone it is "the power of God unto salvation," in which it reveals "a righteousness of faith to faith," it has reached us, and is now ever before us in the written word, the living ministry, and in the examples of its saving efficacy. How ought this mercy, which crowns every other, and without which every other were in vain showered upon us, to excite our gratitude! "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Guilty and unworthy as we are, we know what we must do to be saved; the true sacrifice for sin is exhibited to our faith; great and precious promises meet that variety of want which arises out of the state of our minds, the changes of a vain and suffering life, and our relations to eternity. All that the word religion, understood in the highest and most important sense, implies, is here, stamped and authenticated by the seals of God. All that can exalt the intellect as truth, all that guides the heart and life as law, all that cheers the conscience as grace, are here exhibited. A system of influence and motive, which fosters benevolence and enjoins sanctity, is in operation, rendered effectual to all that believe by "the power of God." What prospects are thus opened to ourselves, to our families, to our country, and, if we are faithful to our vocation, to the whole world. The principle and the power of all moral order and happiness is vouchsafed to us; that which renews individual man after the image of God; that which creates peaceful and hallowed families; and that which, struck into the chaos of the world's confusion and disorder, will go on to control, arrange, and subdue all things to its own laws of truth, righteousness, and peace. For such a gift of God to the world, the whole world ought to bring its offering of universal praise

"From every land, by every tongue."

2. The Gospel claims from us an unshrinking avowal.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," says the apostle; and he was ready to assert its Divine and pre-eminent claims in every place. Such ought to be the spirit with which we are influenced,

modest and humble, as becomes the disciples of truth; but decided and unyielding. Are we taunted by the world for our love of this Divine system and our daily study of it? Let us answer, "It is the power of God unto salvation;" and what is there on earth which ought so deeply to interest me and all to whom it is published? Is the doctrine of faith in the atonement, as the only condition of salvation, the subject of aspersion and contempt by proud and unhumbled men? The reply is at hand. The Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation," only "to every one that believeth;" and "the righteousness of faith is revealed only to faith;" the faith of him who, awakened to his danger, and cut off from every other hope, trusts in this alone, and accepts salvation as God has appointed to administer it.

Is the Gospel assailed by the sophistry or malignity of infidelity? I am not to shrink, although human reason affects to relieve me from mysteries, and to ground every part of its own theory upon demonstration. Here, if I judge truly, if I reason well, I cannot be made ashamed; for if I am saved by this Gospel, if "every one that believeth" is saved from guilty fear, and from sin's dominion, what demonstration is so clear as this? The ends of true religion are accomplished by it, and it is therefore true religion itself. We know what faith in the Gospel effects; but where are the moral triumphs of unbelief?

Does that false and delusive form of Christianity, which boasts of its rationalism, endeavour to shame your simple faith by the philosophizing airs which it assumes? You may boldly expose the cheat, and charge home a real infidelity upon its head; the more aggravated for its pretended friendship, the more detestable because it cries, "Hail, Master!" and betrays him with a kiss. It is "another Gospel;" not that which you have received from St. Paul, the teacher of us Gentiles "in faith and verity." It denies the Son, who, though of "the seed of David, according to the flesh," has been declared to be the Son of God with power, "according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Nor is its Gospel "the power of God," since it denies the Holy Spirit, whose power alone can make it so; and, for "the righteousness which is by faith," it substitutes its own proud and delusive Pharisaism.

Exalted, then, as your religion is, by the Divinity of its Author; energetic, as it is rendered by the influence of the Spirit, "the Lord and Giver of life;" and able as it is to ease every labouring conscience, by the offer of a "righteousness which is by faith;" if you rightly think and rightly feel, you can never be made ashamed of your hope. Let the cross of Christ be to "the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; to us who are saved it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

3. The Gospel claims our grateful and practical acceptance.

Our theoretic faith, however right, is but the more reproving to us, and but the more aggravates our guilt, if it become not first the faith which moves by fear, and then the faith by which we are impelled into that only Refuge in which we can find safety. "Salvation" is the great end of the Gospel: nothing less than this can be supposed to be an adequate final cause for so wonderful an interposition as the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God. It was surely not to set up mere opinions and arrange new forms of worship that he underwent

his humiliations and passion; but to save us from the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, and the eternal wrath of our offended God. Whatever, therefore, of this Gospel we know, approve, believe, or practise, if it leaves us short of personal salvation, is utterly nugatory to us; this great system has been formed, and Christ has died in vain. After all the eternal plans which have been devised, after all the fulfilments of prophecy, after all the miracles wrought by our Lord and his apostles, after all the great providential interferences to preserve the truth from destruction, and the maintenance of the Church upon its Rock, so that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, something is necessary to be done by us, although under the aids of grace; and without this, the saving benefit will never become ours. The Gospel must be believed; so believed as to awaken our fears,—for the very greatness and inevitableness of our danger was that alone which rendered it necessary; so believed that we may become righteous by faith, or, in other words, be justified by the remission of our sins. If this do not take place, we are only left under the aggravated guilt of neglecting or refusing the appointed remedy; and if it take place, it must be sought with contrite and believing hearts. Arise, then, every one to whom this Gospel comes, "wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Turn to him with "weeping and supplication;" "confess unto the Lord, and give glory to him." "Take with you words, and return unto him:" but with these words of contrite confession, take the promises of his mercy in Christ; rest upon them the whole case of thy fallen and endangered spirit; trust in the appointed sacrifice for sin, to the exclusion of every other, and the salvation shall be thine. Now thou shalt experience deliverance from guilt and condemnation, from moral bondage and enslaving fears; and the same "power of God" which begins the work shall maintain and perfect it; until salvation from sin in this life shall issue in that full and complete salvation which eternity shall reveal and consummate.

SERMON XIII.—*All Things made for the Son of God.*

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him," Colossians i, 16.

HE who is spoken of in these terms is Christ; he in whose blood we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; who stood at the bar of Pilate, who was hung upon a cross, and laid in a grave.

Can any one read them, and not believe him to be God? Man he was; for he was born, and died. "A man of sorrows" was his appropriate designation: a God of sorrows he could not be. Yet this "man of sorrows" is the same person of whom it is predicated in the text, that he made all things. The "man of sorrows," therefore, by a mysterious union of nature, and identity of person, is the God of glory.

We grant, that the design of the apostle in the text was not to prove

this doctrine: and, in fact, he never attempts to prove it; he pronounces it as a first principle; he imposes on it the authority of his inspiration. He proves THAT by nothing; but he proves many things by that: such as the efficacy of his atonement; the glory of our redemption; for "we have redemption through the blood" of Him "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." The text is added, less for the purpose of a direct argument for the Deity of Christ, (though, in fact, it is one,) than to fix the sense in which he uses the terms "image of God," and "first-born of every creature." He employs them as descriptive of true and proper Divinity: for by "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, were all things created." This carries the doctrine at once to the conviction of every man. It is a proof of Deity which no one can deny; it holds on its way with undiminished evidence, through all the tribes of men, wherever the Gospel may circulate, and through every age of time. If there be a maxim that is written clearly, with all the light of its own evidence upon the human soul, it is this,—That he that created all things is God.

By thus ascribing the work of creation to the Son, the apostle, however, does not exclude the agency of the Father and the Holy Spirit. He does not break in upon the unity of the Godhead, and separate the essence of Deity, in distinguishing the persons. The miracles wrought by Christ on earth were his works; yet he ever connects his power and wisdom with the power and the wisdom of the Father. It was so in creation. That was the work of the triune God; but the Son was the immediate and prominent Agent in wielding the three-fold energy of the whole Divine nature. The manner in which this was done we cannot in our present state comprehend. It may be a depth below the fathoming line of our minds, when glorified; but the authority on which we believe it is sufficient. The work of creation was eminently that of the Son. "All things were made by him, and for him."

The last expression, "for him," shows the reason of this, though the manner be concealed. All things were created for the Son, with reference to his work and office as Mediator and Redeemer; to afford him a theatre magnificent enough to unfold his purposes, and wield his offices in; and to afford him subjects, agents, and witnesses of their accomplishment. This, then, proves that the redeeming scheme, committed to the Son of God, to bring into action and consummation, was formed prior to the laying of the foundations of the heaven and the earth: a doctrine often insisted on by the apostle; and it gives a solemn and beyond comparison exalted grandeur to the Christian system. Proportioned to its importance, so to speak, was the time taken to deliberate upon it: before the earth was, before a star shot its light across the firmament, before a human breath broke the silence of eternal nothingness thrown around the throne of God, it was revolved in the solitary but all-sufficient mind of the triune God. Proportioned to its importance was the theatre on which it was brought into sight and action,—the universe of worlds. Proportioned to its importance was the Being to whom it was confided,—the Son,—from whose creating word that universe of worlds had sprung. Proportioned to its importance was the number of beings summoned to witness its glories, to partake of its benefits, to press into its active service, to be ruled in

mercy or conquered by power, to feed upon its felicities for ever, or for ever to be crushed beneath the weight of its awakened vengeance. "All things were created by him, and for him."

This is the interesting subject to which I solicit your attention: Christ, the first and the last; at the head of a vast creation; King of a realm of unmeasurable extent; swaying his sceptre, or lifting his rod, over every being that he has made or redeemed; and claiming, by virtue of his two-fold right, the agency of every thing for the accomplishment of his purposes, and the illustration of his glory. It is a subject infinitely above my humble capacity; but it is one which cannot, though imperfectly, be contemplated without great practical effect.—May the Holy Spirit assist us,

> "What is dark, illumine;
> What is low, raise and support!"

The proposition in the text, that all things were made *for* Christ, is that on which we shall exclusively fix our attention; and it may be affirmed,

I. That the earth was made for him.

As Creator it is doubtless made for him. It reflects his eternal power and Godhead; its extended and varied surface, its rolling ocean, all its vast and all its minute objects, the beautiful and the stupendous, reveal him to our sight. The world is crowded with characters of God; and he that runs may read. But the apostle tells us, that all things were made for the Son, as the Son, that he might become a prominent object. Except in this reference to the redeeming plan, why this eminence should be given to the Son as Creator, no reason can be assigned. Regarding him as Redeemer, we learn a reason; for he was to become our Surety to the Father, and to be the object of our special faith. As Redeemer, therefore, the earth was made for the Son; and it has been used with special reference to his purposes. This is the scene where he began to display his redeeming plans; where he still carries them on; where he will perfect them. Here sin was permitted to enter, and display its malignity; here grace began to abound; successive dispensations have been developing its struggles and its triumphs. Other worlds are but the spectators, or the scaffolding that holds them. This is the place of combat; light and darkness, truth and error, rebellion and power, Christ and Belial, have been contending; and the struggle still continues. We know, however, how it will terminate. After it has developed truths of a kind most important to all created beings to know, and produced events which shall repose in the solemn and salutary remembrance of created minds for ever; after it has developed the character of God more gloriously than could otherwise have been done in grace and justice, and emblazoned it in deathless monuments of power, wisdom, and goodness; the Redeemer God shall deliver up his kingdom to the Father, and receive the united homage of immortal men and angels, for ever and for ever.

II. The visible universe was made for him: "All things were made by him, and for him."

Visible nature contains not only the earth on which we live, but worlds unnumbered above us. These are the work of his hands. He that laid the foundations of the earth stretched out also the heavens as

a curtain. "He calleth the stars by their names;" and, because he is great in power, not one of them faileth. All these were created by him, and for him, the redeeming Son.

But what connection have these with the work of Christ, as Redeemer? On the contrary, it has been presumed, that the discoveries of modern philosophy, by which they appear to be worlds, have rendered it less probable to reason that this speck of matter should be so specially the object of Divine care and interposition. On this subject it is sufficient for faith that they were made by the Son, and for him; and that his work on earth is connected with them, and they with his redeeming purposes, though we know not how. But let us not thus dismiss the question: for this truth, dark as is our vision, is stronger than the reason against it; nor could the objection have been ever made, had the full light of revelation been suffered to shine upon the mind.

In either case, whether the worlds above us be inhabited, or not inhabited, the subject is supposed to involve the believer in revelation in great difficulties. But why? Let us take it first, that they are destitute of moral beings; vast but unpeopled masses; with the furniture of worlds, but without inhabitants. So are many immense tracts of this globe; furnished for human residence, but on which human footsteps have never trodden. Yet, who thinks of arguing from this fact, that the world must be full of people? But, leaving this, does it follow that they are made in vain? Were there no beings beside man, and had man only a present existence; were he never to start into a spirit, and be equal to the angels of God; this might have weight: but there are unnumbered eyes, beside the eyes of God, which view creation; and unnumbered myriads from this earth are yet to be redeemed and glorified, and with unclouded eyes and unwearied activity are to behold and contemplate the works of God. To a believer in revelation this is indubitable. Here is a reason for the creation of the whole universe, vast as it may be, and boundless as it may expand under the calculations of philosophy. God has spread before the eyes and curious minds of the inhabitants of the invisible world the scenes of universal nature. There his boundless riches are poured forth; and the profuse energy of his Godhead, and the infinite contrivances of his skill, are displayed to feed the appetite of intellect; to renew, by ceaseless novelty, the fire of devotion; and, in connection with a perfect knowledge of his moral government, to advance the whole nature of the moral beings he has made, though they should only consist of the angels of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth.

Does any one say, there is too much of mere material creation for these purposes? Then, by the same reasoning, I would say, that there is a needless waste of matter in the world itself. We have a succession of similar objects; we have in innumerable instances the same objects placed before us. Half the number of blades of grass, of stars made visible, a globe one thousandth part the dimensions of this which we inhabit, might have availed, if God had restricted his goodness to what was just sufficient; but this is not his measure. In nature and grace he giveth exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. He courts attention by the high, the deep, the vast, the small; by what is beautiful, by what is awful; and when the instruction of

mind is in question,—mind, his own image,—mind, which, like himself, is immortal,—ample indeed are his ministrations to its advantage. To rescue mind, he became incarnate; to impress it with himself, to heighten and exalt, to furnish it with knowledge and pleasure ever increasing, he made the stars of heaven like the sand on the sea shore. O man, "is thine eye evil, because he is good?" If, then, the visible universe above us serves to strike the moral of his revelation home to our hearts; if it be an auxiliary to the devotion of men and angels; all these things were created for him,—for purposes of his glory and beneficence.

But let us take the other view, and suppose them inhabited; what can follow, from that, unfavourable to the Christian scheme? Are there not suppositions, uncontradicted by any principle we learn in Christianity, which are quite reconcilable with the idea that all things were made for the Son as Redeemer; and that, in the most important senses, the benefits of his redeeming work on earth may extend to every moral agent not doomed to hopeless perdition, which his hand has scattered over the infinitude of space?

One thing can never be forgotten by the Christian,—that there is something in the affairs of this world, and especially in the developements of the grace and official acts of Christ, to interest angels. And who are they? The courtiers of heaven, the highest orders of the intelligent creation; yet their minds receive information, and their affections impulse, from the heights and depths of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Now, that which can interest and improve the highest, must interest and improve the lower, orders of beings, who, on this supposition, fill distant worlds, though they have kept their state, and are both holy and happy.

But you think, perhaps, that they have no means of forming an acquaintance with the nature and benefits of human redemption. What, then, can He who made them be at a loss how to instruct them? Does one sun dart his beams above, below, around, as well as upon a single spot of earth; and cannot the central light of God convey revelation to others, as well as to us? Is there no angel to bear the news? no prophet among them to receive the inspiration? To them, then, as to principalities and powers in heavenly places, may be made known the manifold wisdom of God in the Church. And, indeed, if those worlds are inhabited, it must be made known to them; for they are created for the Son.

But there is another idea, which may show us in how important a sense all holy and happy beings may be benefited by the work of redemption, even when they are not its direct subjects. What is it that secures the constant and free obedience of happy intelligences after their state of trial is ended? It is not force. They are free; yet they cannot fall. How, then, are they preserved, but by such views of the evil of sin, of the character of God, and the excellency of holiness, as exercise a powerful and ever-increasing bias upon the will? But for the events of this lower world, for any thing we know to the contrary, no being would have had a stronger hold upon bliss than Adam had. How powerfully the redemption of man must operate, with all the events connected with it, by showing the evil of sin, and the justice of God, we know in part from our own experience. By these clear views,

—more clear than on such subjects we could otherwise have had,—angels are probably confirmed in their glory; and certainly the saints are. Here, then, is an ennobling sense in which all things were made for him. If love be a motive to obedience, every happy creature shall feel its influence by the history of the dying love of Christ. If holiness, justice, truth, mixed with the milder lustres of compassion, thus shed their awful glories upon Calvary; and if a thought could arise, "Let us sin, because grace abounds;" the yawning depths of hell would strike the impression home to the inmost spirit, "Our God is a consuming fire."

If, however, any should yet think, that, among so many myriads of worlds, it is incredible that God should look upon man, and should redeem him, let such a man go and study the words of our Lord, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance," Luke xv, 4–7. When the moral of this parable has sunk into his heart, let him go forth with David, and in David's spirit, not that of cold philosophic incredulity, and exclaim, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Psalm viii, 3, 4.

III. Things invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, were created for him.

These expressions refer to those beings we usually call by the general name of angels. I shall not attempt to explain them. They probably relate to the different angelic orders and offices; and they are not given to gratify a vain curiosity, but to inform us that there are no beings, however high and glorious in the creation of God, that were not made for Christ, and put under him. Of this we have sufficient intimation in Scripture, to establish the fact, and to impress us with the glories of the Messiah God, and the interest which all heaven has in his plans.

When He who afterward hung upon the cross laid the foundation of the earth, they sang the birth of material nature. To their wondering eyes the earth rose from the deep of nothingness, and light displayed the perfect workmanship of God. In the intercourse carried on by God with the patriarchs, they bore his messages. When the law was given, they collected the clouds, shook the earth, and spake in the fearful name of God. In the visions of the prophets they appeared in the airy scene, and marshalled the prophetic pictures and emblems which were to show forth Christ and his kingdom. Gabriel announced the birth of John, the forerunner, and of Jesus. They pressed into all the scenes of his humiliation, his temptation, his agony, his death. When the first begotten was brought into the world, they bowed to the mandate, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and when he ascended to his kingdom, they pledged themselves to his cause. In the early ministry

of the apostles they were often conspicuous agents; and in the machinery of the Revelation they are in the sublimest attitudes, the ministers of his terror and grace. When the dead shall rise, they shall be present. At the final developement, they will gather together the elect from the four winds of heaven, in order to their full glorification; and gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire," Matt. xiii, 41, 42.

If from the dimness of another state sufficient light breaks to enable us, at intervals at least, to see "thrones, principalities, and powers" in the train of Jesus; if through the texture of the veil we see those flames of love and zeal occasionally flitting past us, in work connected with our interest; what are we to learn from this? Numerous, doubtless, are the lessons; greatly, and in various ways, does this minister to our edification. But, if only one end were answered, it would be most important to us; if it only reproved us for our indifference to our religion. The "things" which we too often forget, and are too cold in making known to others, "the angels desire to look into."

IV. Man was made for the Son of God.

Man is the great subject of redeeming grace; and for the sake of his redemption, and all the consequences connected with it, man and every thing else were made. Other beings may derive benefit indirectly, or, like angels, they may be employed as agents in the accomplishment of the favourite design committed to the Son; but man is the subject of this vast display of love and mercy.

We are not indeed to suppose that the fall of man was decreed, and that God disposed things so that it must happen; but the scheme of salvation was laid, and every thing arranged in the prospect of that event. God foresaw that sin would enter, that man would fall, that the race would become guilty and miserable; and the Son was made the Creator, that he might with more effect become the Redeemer. Man was thus made for him; not a sinner for him; but his own immediate creature for him; that he might espouse his cause, and single him out as an object on which to display the tenderness of his compassion,—the profusion of his mercy.

Before this could take place, something, however, was to be done for man by the Son; done first in covenant agreement with the Father, and then actually in the fulness of time: and on this it is necessary for us to dwell, before we can understand in how high and important a sense man is given to the Son, and is made for him. There are principles in the government of God not to be compromised; rights not to be given up; and these principles and rights were in dreadful array against man as a sinner. This rendered his case hopeless. Justice demanded that he should be left to the threatened penalty,—death; death which had destroyed the germ of immortality in his body, disorganized its beauteous frame, and exposed it to disease and dissolution; death which had withered the powers of a spirit still immortal, and tortured its deep sensibility with all the varieties of mental wo. No way of escape was left but redemption; and none could pay the redemption price but the Son. It must be an adequate compensation; it must secure all the rights of God. It was done. In the silent councils of Godhead, before the world began, it was resolved. "Lo, I come to do thy will," said the Son; and the covenant was made. It

was gradually unfolded, through successive dispensations, till the fulness of time. Then he came; the pledge was redeemed, the covenant established, and the title of all who had been saved prospectively confirmed. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten Son of the Father,) full of grace and truth." In that flesh he suffered. How much, we cannot tell; but "no sorrow was like unto his sorrow." It was bodily pain; for that was part of the penalty. It was mental pain; for it was the hiding of God's face. It was the array of demons; it was blackness and darkness; it was hell,—the sufferings of the damned accumulated in the person of our Sufferer. The spirit trembled, and the body died. This was the redemption price; and he rose to claim the right of man, the special object of his benevolence and salvation.

How then does the plan develope itself as to the human race? Let us take man as an individual. It finds him guilty; but offers, by the hands of his redeeming God, a full and ample pardon and oblivion of the past. It finds him in error, earthly, at enmity with his God, under the power of Satan, the habitation of evil, wasting life in vanity and vexation, gliding down the stream of a short life to endless misery. It awakens his conscience; sets before him his condition; bends his will; elevates his affections; works in him an entire change; leads him in the dignity of holiness through a polluted world; gives him the neck of his former masters; urges him from conquest to conquest, till death itself falls, a stingless monster, at his feet; conducts him through the gate into the high abode of the spirits of just men made perfect; and there bids him wait, till his body shall awake from its dust, clothed in robes of immortality, and admitted to the highest heaven, associated with the first-born sons, and, like them, beholds the face of the Father, and joins in their service of zeal, and their work of eternal praise.

But, great as this is, we should lose much of the dignity and glory of the plans of Heaven, were we to confine them to man as an individual only. The manner in which the sad effects of sin have been presented to us most sensibly, and consequently in the present state most affectingly, is in man collectively, considered as a whole, or as he is seen distributed into "nations, and kindreds, and people." View the moral map. Here and there you behold a speck green and fertile, "like a field which the Lord hath blessed;" but the eye fails to track over the boundless deserts with which they are surrounded. In a few places you behold truth studding with her rays the almost universal darkness, while the intervals are filled up with clouds and gloom. Narrow as is the way of life, it is broad enough for the few that walk in it; while in the ample path of self indulgence and earthliness, the crowd rushes in pressed ranks, and in a continuous line, to everlasting perdition. Death stalks in triumph; hell shouts over the victims; superstition skulks, with bloody knife, under the pall within which she perpetrates her crimes; and Satan is still, in an eminent sense, "the god of this world."

But forbidding as is the aspect of these truths, man, collectively through all his kindreds, is made for the Son. "He ruleth over men, and hath dominion over the nations." And he must assert his right. If his plans extend not to enlighten the dark, to purge the polluted and

recover this wandering world,—if he is not appointed to overthrow the tyranny of sin and Satan, to reduce the chaos, to make his truth triumphant, to present a rebellious but penitent race to the Father, for forgiveness and adoption, and for a Father's blessing,—what means the prophetic scene where he "travels in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save?" What meant the all-important words, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?" Matt. xxviii, 18–20. What means that action of the "mighty angel," who "took up a stone like a great mill stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down,"—the type, not perhaps of one only, but of every false religion, that has debased and demoralized man,—"and shall be found no more at all?" And above all, what means the ecstasy of heaven and earth when the Lamb took the book of prophecy from the hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne? What was that book, but the counsels of God respecting man? What its seven seals, to be opened successively by the Lamb, but his successive accomplishment of those counsels? Seal after seal they are opened; and the glorious issue we may gather from the interest produced in every creature, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and under the earth. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever," Rev. v, 11–13.

We have lived in times of darkness and confusion, with only a few gleams of heavenly light to cheer us; but we are not to argue against the result. "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand; and the thoughts of his heart unto all generations." So we have seen a gloomy morning followed by a bright and joyous day. We have seen dark clouds gather around the morning sun, as if to extinguish his beams; and fogs condense themselves, as though to shroud the earth from his influence; but we have seen too the glorious burst of his splendour, the light subduing the darkness; we have watched the progress of the heaven-directed orb, till, after having scattered life over the world, he has closed the day amidst the homage of the same clouds, gorgeous in his splendours, and heightening his original glories with floods of molten light, and richest forms of reflected lustre.

Lastly. All things are for the Son, because the agency of every thing that can be employed in his cause is given to him.

As every thing was made by the Son, with reference to bringing into action and completion the purposes of redemption, it is natural to consider this not only as the end of every dispensation to the world, but to look for an obvious connection between every great event and the moral improvement of man. This, however, cannot always be traced

by us, and for evident reasons,—we can but see parts of a plan which comprehends all beings and ages. It is with our mind as with our eyes. It has its horizon; and more unequal is that which we can take in with our mind, in comparison with the whole, than is the sensible horizon traversed by sight to the dimensions of the globe. Beside this, it is often the pleasure of God to travel the path of his counsels alone, to make us sensible of our want of skill by leaving us in the labyrinth, till, by some unexpected turn, he appears in sight, and we confess that he only is equal to his own work. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

We are also to consider, that as the work of subduing the world necessarily implies the government of free agents, his plans are liable to counteractions; that his is not only a work of mercy, but of justice; and that justice is often employed to punish by the delay or refusal of mercies. All these circumstances create not only difficulty in the comprehension of the proceedings of the great Ruler, but sometimes apparent contradictions. But though the designs of God are often turned out of their right course, they are not frustrated. They run to their consummation by a circuitous course; the surmounting of difficulty only rises in proof of the superior wisdom with which they are planned, and the superior skill with which they are conducted; and as the wrath of man is made to praise him, so success is often laid in apparent disappointment, and the folly of man overruled to display more eminently the wisdom of God. To trace accurately all the details of the administration of Jesus, in whose hands the affairs of the world have ever been, may be one of the exalting employments of heaven; but it is encouraging here upon earth to see evidence that every event and every agent, though we cannot always discover how, is pressed into the service of Christ, and the salvation of the world. True it is, that his way is in the waters, and his footsteps are not known; yet here and there a billow bending under that footstep, and a wave curled by its pressure, shows to the attentive mind its general direction. All things are for the Son. Whether political events, or the appearance of distinguished characters, or the discoveries of science, or the energies of his Church; all move in his train, and all impel the wheels of his chariot.

See the past in proof of the whole. See political events connected with his plans. The call of Abraham is the preservation of the true religion; the existence of Israel among the nations, a constant testimony to the true faith; their dispersion, the means of diffusing it among the heathens, and a corroboration of its truth among Christians. The unity of the Roman empire is the means of the easy circulation of the Gospel through the civilized world; the northern invasion, the bringing of its myriads into the fold of Christ. The separation of the Roman empire into many small states in the west, too small to allow them subsistence by land, is the means of driving them to the ocean, and of planting Christian colonies on the shores of every considerable heathen state in the world, and thereby opening a passage for the light into the abodes of darkness.

See great characters appearing at different periods: Moses, to establish the Jewish institute; Ezra, to restore it; Nebuchadnezzar made the most potent monarch of the east, that his conversion might

have more influence; Cyrus, that he might build the temple of God; John, that he might be the forerunner of Jesus; Paul, that he might be the apostle of the Gentiles; the Protestant reformers, with qualities admirably fitted to their work; and the modern missionaries of the day, actuated by a quenchless zeal, and possessing every diversity of talent.

See the discoveries of science, or of apparent chance, made for him as their highest object: printing, placing truth beyond the power of corruption; and giving wings to the word of God, like the "angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people;"—the magnetic needle, trembling on its pivot, leading the seaman across oceans which none before ever dared; throwing upon the seas a floating bridge to connect the most distant continents;—and commerce, with her various inventions, bringing the whole world into acquaintance and intercourse. Who sees not in all this an evident and direct bearing upon the accomplishment of the plans of the Redeemer?

And, finally, see the Church, the direct and authorized instrument of his glory. Her Sabbaths are for him; her ministers, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," are for him; her ordinances, her zeal, her purity, her learning, her talent, rank, property, all are laid at his feet. His "people are willing in the day of his power." In his name they lift up their banners, and pledge themselves to an unceasing war with sin, to an unintermitting war with his enemies, till they overthrow the last intrenchment, storm the last fortress which vice and ignorance have erected, planting upon it the sacred standard with shouts of victory, and hailing it with shouts of gratulation, "Grace, grace unto it!" "All things were made by him, and for him."

I will conclude with a few practical reflections.

1. Can we, brethren, dwell for a moment on a subject of this kind, without being convinced of the infinite value of salvation; that salvation which too many neglect, the salvation of the immortal soul? The subject stamps it with infinite importance. To introduce a plan of redemption, and to effect it, all things were made. To enable God, consistently with his justice, to save guilty sinners, the Son of God himself, the Creator of all things, died upon the cross, and poured out his blood; and to accomplish this scheme he was raised to heaven. Is it possible that we can neglect so great a salvation? Is it possible that we can live a moment longer without being deeply impressed with this,—that in comparison of this great salvation every thing is less than nothing and vanity? I may add too, in proportion to all these things is the guilt of every man that neglects it. In proportion to the value of the death of Jesus, and the infinite obligations we are placed under, must be the dreadful guilt of every man who, having the Gospel preached to him, lives according to the course of this world. Let every conscience be alarmed; for the adequate punishment of such a sin can be nothing less than eternal banishment from God; blackness and darkness, and wo, for ever.

2. It teaches us whose we are.

All things were made for him. Then indeed we are his in the most absolute sense. As redeemed creatures we are his. Every man who

has taken the powers of his body or mind, and used them contrary to the rights of God, and has made them instruments of sin, has committed felony on the property of Jesus Christ. He has taken what God designed to be his hallowed temple, and introduced into it a polluted world. God is ever tenacious of his temple; ever tenacious of his own right and glory; nor is he less so when the spirit of man is in question. He has set a value upon it. His object is to recover it. He calls it his right. Be convinced of this, that you are never in a more noble sense your own than when you practically acknowledge that you belong to him. When every faculty is employed in his service, then only do you derive the richest blessing.

3. The subject affords encouragement to every penitent who is seeking forgiveness, as it shows the infinite value of that blood which bought him. "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold," nor with the blood of beasts; "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot." Did not the apostle design to draw from it this most important inference, that no blood of any other sacrifice could afford rational confidence in approaching God? But when we see that He who died for us is properly God, we perceive a value in his atonement, on which we may rest. We have deserved nothing, but his blood pleads for us; the blood of Him by whom we were created; the blood of him who made "all things, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."

4. The subject discovers the absolute security of all good men. All those who have believed in Jesus Christ, "all the saints are in thy hand." He on whom we have believed, to whom we must commit the direction of our path, and the keeping of our spirits, he is the true God. If a man live by faith on him, he hangs on omnipotent power. He can be at no loss to succour us who upholds all things. We may live with confidence, and die without fear; and find the same God beyond the boundaries of this world. Commit yourselves, then, into his hands, in the full persuasion that he who has undertaken our salvation is the absolute Proprietor of all in heaven and all on earth.

SERMON XIV.—*The Enemies of Christ vanquished.*

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth," Psalm cx, 1–3.

THIS passage is quoted by our Lord in a dispute with the doctors of the Jewish Church: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no

man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions," Matt. xxii, 41–46.

From this we learn,

1. That the psalm was written by David, according to its title: a consideration of importance, as I shall soon have occasion to show.

2. That the words were written under the influence of the Holy Ghost. "David in" or by "the Spirit calleth him Lord." Whatsoever then the words may import, they do not contain the private, unauthorized opinions of David, but are the solemn revelations of the Holy Spirit.

3. That the words are spoken of Christ. He is David's "Lord;" he is seated at the right hand of God; he shall rule in the midst of his enemies. They speak of him, and of the establishment of his universal kingdom. In applying them to the present occasion then, we proceed upon sure ground. Here is nothing fanciful, nothing uncertain.

Our attention is called,

I. To the person to whom universal dominion is assigned.

1. He is spoken of as truly man. This may appear from the phrase, "Sit thou on my right hand." It imports being raised from a lower to a higher condition. It implies that he had been in the hands of his enemies; and that now these enemies were to be made his footstool. Our Saviour also calls the person here termed David's Lord his son; and the Pharisees agree that the same personage is spoken of under both these titles. Such was our Saviour. He was a son of David; he was once in a low and humble condition; he was once in the hands of those enemies whom he so soon afterward made his footstool.

2. It is as clear that the person spoken of was contemplated as God. He was David's "Lord." Now, as David was an independent monarch, he had no earthly lord. Whom, then, could he contemplate and call his Lord, but him who has "a name written on his vesture and his thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords?" Precisely on this point rests the weight of our Lord's silencing question proposed to the Pharisees. With many other essential doctrines of the ancient faith of the Jewish Church, they had given up the doctrine of the Divinity of the Messiah. They expected him only to perform a low and earthly part at his advent; and they assigned him a low and earthly nature. "If then he be David's son, how doth he call him Lord?" This they could not answer on their own system. The quibbling of modern Jews and Socinians had not then been resorted to. The only answer they could give was fatal to their errors; and they answered him not a word.

Thus, then, the universal government is placed in the hands of a God-Man; in the hands of him who was of "the seed of David according to the flesh, but declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." As man, he is identified with us; he bears us the affection of a brother, as well as of a Creator. As God, his sufferings have a boundless merit; and he saves to the uttermost all them that come to God by him.

The text calls our attention,

II. To his solemn inauguration to his regal dignity. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

When did this take place? When was this predictive vision fulfilled? It was fulfilled in that glorious resurrection and ascension which succeeded his bitter cross and passion.

Mark the time. His enemies had retired from his cross exulting; they had sealed the stone, and set the guard. Then the quickening Spirit awoke the sacred victim; and he rose to die no more.

Mark the pomp of the coronation day of the King of kings; a pomp corresponding with his dignity, and the glory of his empire. It was but very partially discovered to the disciples at the ascension; as too overpowering to burst on the sight of mortal men. But there were indications of it presented to the view of the disciples. They saw the Lord taken up; and two angels, a part of the procession, waiting behind the cloud, announced to the gazing men of Galilee his second coming. Of what took place behind the screen of that cloud which separated him from their sight, nothing is said in the evangelic history; for the disciples were not witnesses. But the same David, who in Spirit called him Lord, and bowed with prostrate homage before his supreme Divinity, saw that pomp by the same unveiling Spirit, and has recorded it in two of his Psalms. In one he tells us, that when the Lord "ascended on high," "the chariots of God were twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;" that "the Lord was among them," in the midst of them, "as in Sinai," Psalm lxviii, 17, 18, with a pomp as visible and glorious. Thus the Sufferer for man, he whom his enemies had taunted with his pretensions to kingly dignity, he over whose cross had been written in three languages, as though to publish the derision through the earth, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,"—was hailed with acclamation as Sovereign by all the host of heaven; and the song they sung as they approached the gates is expressly given in another Psalm: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory," Psa. xxiv, 7–10

We proceed to consider,

III. The enemies arrayed against his rightful claims.

Just as is his sovereignty, and gracious as are the ends it was designed to accomplish, he has his enemies: "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

It is one of the saddest testimonies to the depravity of our nature, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." This expression marks also the universality of the disease. Every mind is enmity to God until it is regenerate; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."—Nor is it difficult to make out this charge against our nature.

Let us take this enmity even in its mildest form, and where it has been from education, and various other causes, considerably counteracted; among professors of the faith of Christ, but who have never felt the regenerating power of the Spirit. Why is it that God is not in all your thoughts? that your minds so frequently, and for considerable intervals of time, lose all recollection of his presence, and agency, and authority? Can this arise from any thing but aversion? Thoughts of Christ are not welcome to the mind

Why is it that the world occupies your entire care and love? Is it not because, when worldly and spiritual things come into comparison, you dislike your Saviour, and your hearts go after your idols?

Why is it that, when the reasonableness of your subjection to Christ is pressed upon your understanding, and in judgment you are convinced that it is equally your duty and interest to submit in all things to his will; that you, nevertheless, find reasons to disobey the dictates of your minds, and to violate your vows? There is dislike and enmity against your Lord.

You may go a considerable way in assenting to the claims of Christ to rule over you; but when they are pressed to their full extent against all your favourite occupations and pleasures, against your besetting sins; why do you resist this as strict, and seek some easier, some smoother path? This arises from enmity to Christ. Nay, this in its mildest form has in it all the essential characters of rebellion against his authority; for where is the formalist, where the lukewarm, where the worldly and sinning professed believer in Christianity, who would not alter its constitution, and render it accommodating to his own habits, if he could? If a man would alter the fundamental laws of government, and wrest the sceptre and the sword out of the hands of his monarch, is he not at enmity with him? is he not a rebel? And pray, where is the sinner who would not escape being judged, and repeal the threatenings of Christianity, and connect safety with sin and carelessness? thus altering in his wishes the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom, and deposing him from his seat.

If there be then proofs of enmity in the house of his professed friends, under this pretence of saying, "Lord, Lord," the fact can want no evidence in the world at large. Look at the herd of daring violators of his laws. There is not a regulation of his which they do not spurn and trample under foot. Look at the apostate band of infidels and blasphemers. With an enmity most intolerant and bitter would they destroy his revelations, and make his precious name, which shall endure for ever, to perish from the earth. Look at the Jews. Like their forefathers, they "gnash upon him with their teeth." Look at the millions of Mohammedans, who prefer to him a lying and impure impostor, deny his Godhead, atonement, and regal character, and even cherish toward all who bear his name the most deadly hostility. And the pagan systems are founded on enmity to Christ, as revealed in the patriarchal promises. The original authors of the different forms of paganism "did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" and from enmity to him, they set themselves to obliterate the pure principles and rites of the patriarchal morality and religion.

And what is it that presents such barriers to the progress of his truth in the world but this enmity? In many places there are combinations of political power formed against it. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psalm ii, 2, 3. And how many of his ministers do we see who publish his name, and invite submission to him, in vain? In the camp of his enemies the people will remain; while the unsuccessful ambassador of peace returns, saying, "All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people"

And yet how strange a collocation of words is "enmity against God," and God in Christ! Behold his purity, his meekness, his wisdom, his kind teachings, his generous sufferings for men, his constant intercession, his willingness to forgive; the freeness and copiousness of the blessings which he has to bestow upon all who will ask of him; and say, is there a stigma upon human nature so deep, so dark, as this,—that it is enmity to God! Go, shut your books on the controversy as to original sin, and the natural corruption of the human heart. We need them not. Close them, on which ever side they are written.—This is enough. Christ has his enemies among those who are most indebted to his kindness. He has not only nourished and brought them up, by his creative and preserving grace, but died that they might live; and yet, "hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! *they*," even *they*, "have rebelled against him!"

We proceed to notice,

IV. The means of their subjugation.

These are three: the sending of the rod of his strength out of Zion,—granting days of power,—and the willing co-operation of his people.

1. The rod of his power.

Here is a reference to the sceptre, which in ancient times was a straight rod, to denote equity and truth. It is spoken of as an instrument of grace; and hence we read of holding out the sceptre as a token of favour. It was also an instrument of power; and is here called his strong rod; "the rod of his strength." The phrase, "to go out of Zion," enables us to ascertain the precise meaning. It is synonymous with "the law of the Lord," which it was said should "go out of Zion; and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," Isaiah ii, 3 The strong rod, therefore, is the Gospel, both in its grace and justice, and the joyful thought is inspired, that it is by his Gospel that Jesus rules the world, and will subdue his enemies. The epithet "strong," applied to the rod, marks the mighty power and efficacy of the Gospel, when wielded by the hand of its Lord, to govern and to save the world.

Mark its strength.

There is the strength of its evidence. Its Divine origin is demonstrated by prophecies and miracles. The prophecies imply a knowledge of future contingencies; and therefore were uttered under the inspiration of Him to whom are "known all his works from the beginning of the world." The miracles were wrought by the power of God; and hence the Gospel bears the indubitable seal of the Almighty.

The very majesty of its enunciation gives it strength. It was not delivered by its Author in the hesitating, speculating manner, with which even wise men were in the habit of advancing their opinions; but with the very port and air of a Divine mind, to which all its truths, deep as they are, were familiar. He speaks as one having authority. "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (πληροφορια;) a word which denotes the carrying of a ship forward, with her sails spread, and filled with wind; urging on its way against opposing currents, thus bearing down irresistibly upon the convictions of men.

It is the rod of his strength, because it searches the heart. It reveals

man to man. St. James calls it a "glass," a reflecting mirror. St. Paul ascribes to it the attributes of Divinity. "The word of the Lord is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb. iv, 12. Thus its power has been felt in all ages. After listening to our Saviour, the woman of Samaria said, "Come, see a man that hath told me all things whatsoever I have done." St. Paul, speaking of the assemblies of the Christians, where the word of God is declared by the aid of the Spirit, says, "If there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth," 1 Cor. xiv, 24, 25. Thus many of you, nay, all of you, feel. Your consciences acknowledge the decision of God's word; you bow to it, whether you will or not; you are "convinced of all, you are judged of all."

But that which gives it its mightiest energy is its love. Here lies its omnipotence; and therefore St. Paul determined to "know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." No other system could tell guilty and wretched man, that "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Tell a sinful man that he is wrong,—he knows it; tell him that he is under wrath,—he feels it; but that alone breaks not, subdues not, the heart. But tell him that, although he is cast out, he is not forsaken; though he has forgotten God, God has never forgotten him; that he is waiting to forgive and to bless;—by this, how many hearts have been subdued! And by this the wide world shall be subdued also.

True it is, that the sceptre is an emblem of power and justice, and that the reign of Christ has its judgments great and terrible; and these will have their share in removing hinderances out of the way, and in making the punishment of his enemies conspicuous; but it is by the cross that the nations are to be brought to the obedience of faith; and by love shall they be won back to God.

2. Granting days of power.

Some critics read, "In the day of the gathering thy forces, thy people shall be willing;" but every interpretation must go to this point,—that the special exertion of the power and authority of Christ, to increase the number of his subjects, and to enlarge his kingdom, must be intended. Such a day of power was the pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and three thousand souls were converted to Christianity. Such were the earliest ages of the Church, during which a rich effusion of Divine influence was vouchsafed to believers; in consequence of which men in great numbers were raised up to preach Christ crucified, a way was opened for the exercise of their ministry, and the Lord mightily gave testimony to the word of his grace. Such was also the time of the reformation, when suitable instruments were raised up to revive primitive Christianity; men who chose rather to pass through the fires of martyrdom than deny the truth; who succeeded in delivering whole nations from the tyranny of the "man of sin;" and by whose instrumentality a new and irresistible impulse was given to the cause

of true religion. Such, also, is our own day, in which we witness a great and blessed revival of apostolical Christianity; but we are taught to expect still greater things.

Hear the animating language of prophecy: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Isaiah xl, 3–5. Fulfilled in part as this prediction was, in John the Baptist, and the personal appearance of Christ, no one supposes that it then received its full accomplishment. It belongs to a class of predictions which have a successive and a germinant accomplishment. Its full meaning is to be displayed only in the latter day. Heralds shall precede the full manifestation of our Lord; and their voices shall be heard in the wilderness of pagan lands. Such are the missionaries of modern days. Into how many of these wildernesses have they penetrated! Behold them in the wilds of the west, in the deserts of Africa, in the distant islands of the south seas, in the steppes of Tartary, on the verge of China, in the jungles of Ceylon and India, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Special operations of Providence seem likewise to be promised in this prophecy, to be effected in the day of the Lord's power. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." Old systems of government, hostile to Christianity, shall be overthrown, commerce shall bring pagan nations into beneficial intercourse with Christian people; and a way shall thus be opened for the general spread of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Kings shall become nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers, to the Church; and in various ways, under a secret influence from above, "the earth shall help the" mystical "woman." And then "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Precisely the same ideas are contained in a subsequent part of the chapter, containing the striking prophecy to which we have just referred. When "Zion gets up into the high mountain," rouses herself to exertion, and looks out for the opportunities of usefulness; when Jerusalem, the depository of "good tidings," lifts up her voice with strength, and no longer hides the word, and whispers only, as though half ashamed of it, but obeys the Divine command, "Lift it up, and be not afraid,"—then, "Behold," says the prophet, "the Lord God will come with a strong hand; his arm shall rule for him, his reward is with him, and his work before him;" or, as Lowth renders the passage, "Behold, the Lord Jehovah shall come against the strong one," the god of this world, "and his arm shall prevail over him." Then, too, when he has thus gathered Jew and Gentile into one fold, "he shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

3. Thy people shall be willing in this day; or, as the Hebrew literally signifies, they shall be "willingnesses." We see this willingness in the day of primitive Christianity. When the apostles were richly baptized with the Holy Ghost, they were willing to publish the

joyful news of salvation through the crucified and risen Redeemer; and when the same Spirit rested upon the disciples, they gladly assisted in the good work. Money was laid at the apostles' feet; the Christians helped the messengers of the Churches on their way after a godly sort; and both among ministers and private Christians there was a general willingness both to labour and suffer for the furtherance of the cause of Christ. So it was, also, at the time of the reformation, and in the late revival of religion; and in this spirit we must act. In this spirit the true people of God will act in reference to the work and honour of their Lord.

The text specifies,

V. The glorious result: "In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth."

This clause has greatly exercised the ingenuity of critics; but the view which most accords with the context is, that it predicts the vast enlargement of Christ's kingdom, and the countless number of his subjects; countless as the dew of the morning. This metaphor of dew was not only most appropriate to convey the idea of multitude, but could not be present to a mind like that of David,—so susceptible of all the grand and tender and beauteous impressions of the works of God,—without also suggesting the idea of an exquisite and diffusive beauty. When, therefore, the prophet leads us from the means by which the kingdom of Christ is to be established, to contemplate their efficient results, he presents the glorious scene before us under two views. The first is, the multitude of Christ's subjects: "Canst thou number the drops of dew?" As impossible will it be to estimate the number of the saved of the human race, in that period to which we look as the end, the consummation of his glorious reign. The flock of Christ has been and still is "a little flock." It has sometimes been reduced so low, that men of strong faith have faltered. "The man of sin," and "the false prophet," have, according to the prophecy, "worn out the saints of the Most High;" and distant spectators have cried, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful are minished from the sons of men." But now a very different scene presents itself. There was an immortal root in the earth, which, close as it might be cut by the axe of persecution, and strewed as the ground was by the goodly stems and branches which that axe had lopped off, no power of man or devils could destroy; and it has shot forth, and spread its branches, so that "the hills are covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof are like the goodly cedars. She hath sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." The seed was trampled down, but not destroyed; and it springs up, men know not how; and its thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold harvests are dispersing it through the earth. The vapour is silently ascending, by an operation unknown to man, and which no human power can stay; and the dew is forming, and will spread itself over the earth. There shall be one heavenly King in the earth, and his name one; and then shall the allegiance of men to their "gods many and lords many" be transferred to its rightful Lord. There shall be "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God the Father of all;" and "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Then all the worship of saints and demons shall be abrogated; all the misleading systems of error pass

away; all opposing authority bow down; "destroyed by the breath of his mouth,"—the preaching of the holy, everlasting Gospel, the word which liveth and abideth for ever,—and by the brightness of his coming; the glorious universal demonstration and overwhelming manifestation of Christ, in the clear and signally authenticated revelation of the word of his truth.

The second view is that of universal moral beauty,—the beauty of holiness, diffused as wide as the dew of his youth from the womb of the morning. The eye cannot look upon a scene more exquisite in beauty than the opening of such a morning as is here presented to the imagination; every hill and vale, every spire of grass, and the spray of every tree, sparkling in the ray of the advancing sun, and breathing life and freshness over all nature. Thus decked and adorned does a second world appear, in the beauty and freshness of holiness, to the eye of the prophet; and thus does he represent it to us. Behold, then, a world, so long in the darkness and death of night, arising out of it by the wondrous operation of its reconciled and redeeming Lord. How diffusive and how marked will be the beauty of holiness, when his work is thus complete! The beauty is every where, on every spire of grass, and every lofty tree; on the lowest and highest orders of society. All are invested with the garments of salvation, and the robes of praise.—It beams upon the cottage, and shows that the poor are visited by Heaven. It sparkles from the throne, and gives it a lustre more glorious than its earthly pomp,—the mild and beauteous lustre of mercy, righteousness, and truth. It gives beauty to unsightly objects; to show us that holiness dignifies the mean, and sanctifies the common and unclean. It adds the beauty of a higher element to that which has an earthly excellence; to teach us that whatever is worthy and useful is rendered so in a far higher sense, when it is connected with religion. It hallows affliction, gives awe to justice, and tenderness to mercy.

Behold this beauty of holiness among the nations. Wars, oppressions, injuries, cease. The earth, tossed and swept for ages by the storms of night, is quiet, imbibes the vivifying dew of Divine influence, and catches the glory of the brightening truth of revelation. Behold it in civil society; in the beautiful order and harmony of pious families; in the charity and kind offices of Christian neighbourhoods; in the reciprocal reverence and confidence of rulers and their subjects.

Behold it especially in the Church. There, indeed, it is eminently appropriate; for, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." It is seen in her ministry; for "her priests are clothed with salvation," and their "lips keep knowledge:" in her doctrine; for the compass, the depth, the height, the harmony, of the whole system of the Gospel being understood and professed, errors and partial views are banished: in her members; those are truly elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. The grace of God is seen in the beautiful simplicity of inquirers; and in the manly vigour of zeal and action in the mature Christian; the lovely dignity of wisdom and gravity and tried example in the aged, already half within the veil, and catching rays of glorification itself. It is seen in her assemblies: behold the beauty of the Lord in his sanctuary; the land and the city still on her Sabbaths, save when the sound of praise from assembled worshippers rolls along the echoing streets; the mute

attention, the decent reverence, the joy repressed by awe, the thrill of exquisite feeling, the sighing of the contrite, the tears of Peter, the entranced affection of Mary, and the joys of salvation.

And why should we behold this dew, spread upon the nations, civil society, and the Churches, and not upon material nature? Something of this the prophets all anticipate. Trees wave with gladness, the floods clap their hands, the valleys laugh. Even the luminaries of heaven shine with increased lustre. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound," Isaiah xxx, 26. True, this is all figurative; but what means it? The inanimate parts of creation are insensible; but then man, who was made to behold them, shall see them under new aspects, and with loftiest and tender associations. To the eye of redeemed man, even they shall partake of the general beauty. The heavens shall declare his glory, and every object lead to him. They shall convey instruction, and open pleasures new and in infinite variety. The whole earth shall be full of his glory.

What do we learn from this entire subject?

1. That, if we are his people in truth, we shall be interested in the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

2. That our service in this respect will be most free and willing.

3. We may learn, under present or future discouragements, to comfort ourselves with these hopes, these prospects. Mysteries in the affairs of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ there have been, and will be. We are to walk by faith. That in missionary objects is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. It is enough that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, and assured us of ultimate success. His power is unlimited; and his word cannot fail, even though heaven and earth should pass away.

By a most mysterious operation is the dew formed; and by means inexplicable to us will the kingdom of Christ be made universal. The dew is formed in the darkness and silence of the night; and when the sun throws around his newly-darted rays, the work, the mysterious work, is made visible. Thus, although the night of the world has not passed away, let us be comforted. A noiseless operation is at work; and in the darkness of past and present dispensations the great result is preparing. It shall be seen when the light of the world arises, and shines on every land. Yes; it shall then be seen that he has been steadily pursuing his purpose to save the world; that he has been making the very wrath of man to praise him, and overruling all things, good and evil, resisting or yielding, the rage of devils and the songs of saints, the power of persecutors and the fall of martyrs, the subtleties of infidelity, the bellowings of blasphemers, and the humble prayers and services of his willing people, to set up, in the fulness of time, and in the best manner, the kingdom of his grace over all mankind. "Blessed," then, O thrice blessed, "be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

Sermon XV.—*Christianity the Wisdom of God in a Mystery.*

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory," 1 Cor. ii, 7.

The commission of the apostles was, to preach every where, and to preach publicly. Christianity did not, therefore, steal privately into the world. Like the light of heaven, it burst upon all ranks of men; and if the majority "loved darkness rather than light," by some of all ranks it was hailed as "the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

Accordingly, we find in the Church of Corinth, not only the poor whom God had chosen "rich in faith," but others, who, from their acquaintance with the literature of their country, and the refinement of their taste, appear to have been of considerable rank in society.

These persons do not, however, appear to have been the best members of this primitive Church; for it was chiefly among them that false and seductive teachers succeeded in forming a party opposed to the great apostle of the Gentiles, of whose influence he complains, in the epistles addressed to them, with all the feeling of an injured and wounded spirit.

From several passages in these epistles, the members of this faction appear to have made objections both to the manner and to the subjects of St. Paul's preaching; considering Christianity, perhaps, too much as a refined and purer system of philosophy. The preaching of the apostle appeared to them too simple an enunciation of the facts and doctrines of their faith; and deficient probably in reasons and illustrations: nor was his elocution sufficiently studied and adorned. The manner of the schools was not sufficiently regarded in the mode of discussion, nor the prevalent nicety of taste regarded in the style.

And this was true. He had received a plain, solemn message to deliver to the world; and he thought it far below a case which involved the eternal interests of men, to reason, when he was appointed, by Divine authority, to announce; or to use any other language, or adopt any other acts of persuasion, than those which a heart filled and warm with his subject teaches to the lips of a man who feels the responsibility of his office, and the value of the immortal souls he is commissioned to attempt to save. He was doubtless

> "Plain in speech, and plain in manner,
> As best became a minister of grace
> To guilty men."

But for this simplicity he had reasons of greatest weight. It was in him choice, not necessity; for he also could have philosophized, and was not ignorant of the popular artifices of rhetoric. So far, therefore, was he from sinking under these attacks of his enemies, he hurls back the weapon upon them, and converts the objection into an instrument of irresistible attack upon that very philosophy which they would have intermingled with Christianity, under the pretence of rendering it more acceptable to men of taste and intellectual cultivation. He tries the case by a rule infallible in such matters, the rule of conse-

quences. "The world by" this boasted "wisdom knew not God:" here was one fact. "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe:" here was another. He intimates also, that success in winning over men to believe in Christianity, by the process which those Corinthians employed who had become "wiser than their teachers," would have been a very unsatisfactory triumph Their object was to please, his to convince and alarm; things utterly incompatible. Their art was "to persuade" by those rhetorical artifices which unlock mysteriously the sources of feeling, fix attention, and gain assent; his business was "to persuade men," as "knowing the terrors of the Lord," and "judging that if one died for all, then were all dead." Converts made by the charm of a new system, so displayed as to captivate the heart only through the imagination, would not in his view have been converts to Christ. On such conversions he could set no value; and he refused the means by which they might possibly have been effected,—he rejected "enticing words of man's wisdom," that "the faith" of the Corinthians "might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God;" their own personal experience of the saving efficacy, and consequently of the Divine authority of the Gospel.

What, then, was St. Paul disposed to concede that Christianity, in that simple and inartificial form in which he announced it, was either "foolish" or contemptible? Just the contrary. No man ever knew how to estimate the grandeur and glory of this simple majesty of truth better than he; and none has so boldly asserted its claims to supremacy It was not in him to shrink from its comparison with any thing that even Greece could exhibit as wise and just. Do these admirers of Gentile philosophy boast of wisdom?—"we speak wisdom." Do they boast of the secrets of their celebrated mysteries?—our religion is "a mystery:" but the wisdom which we speak is "the wisdom of God;" and the mystery was "ordained before the world," formed in the depths of the Divine mind, before time began, and now revealed "to the glory" of all true believers.

This is the connection of the text with the apostle's discourse; but, although it arose out of a particular controversy, it contains general truth, the interest of which no time, no change of circumstances in the Church, can ever abate; and to the three propositions which it contains I therefore direct your attention.

I. Christianity is "the wisdom of God."

Wisdom is knowledge in action; knowledge directed to practical ends, through the most effectual means of accomplishing them. If this be a right view of wisdom, the moral systems of Greece ill deserved that appellation. They were highly imaginative; they fed the appetite for speculation, but they led to no useful principles; and they fell with no power upon the conscience or the conduct, except to mislead and pollute them. But in the Gospel another scene unfolds itself, —"the wisdom of God;" infinite and infallible intelligence is displayed in efficient and wondrous arrangements to enlighten, save, and bless a fallen and guilty world.

1. It affords infallible instruction in all necessary truth.

In order to prove this it is not necessary to bring before you the principal truths which it has either for the first time brought to light, or cleared from the obscurity and distorting mists of the Gentile phi-

losophy,—its revelations concerning God, and Christ, and man, and morals, and immortality. That which more especially illustrates the wisdom of this Divine system, as an effectual means of conveying demonstrated, and therefore satisfactory knowledge to man upon all these great subjects, is, that they are divinely revealed. All true knowledge properly comes from God: even human art and science, and every discovery of this kind, were probably first suggested to the mind of man by God; but secretly, and without any mark of distinction at all from the thoughts of man's own heart, with which they were unconsciously intermingled: nor was any external sign given to intimate that they were in any sense "wisdom from above." It is easy to conceive that much of the truth which the Bible contains might thus have been secretly suggested, and have been brought before the world only as the results of the investigations of a few superior minds. Beyond their own rational evidence none of these truths, however, would have had, in this case, a greater than human authority. They would have been but matters of opinion still; there would have been nothing to work instant conviction; nothing to compel, by hopes or fears taken from responsibility to God and to a future judgment, the attention and assent of man. This was one of the disadvantages of the most enlightened parts of the pagan world, that even what of the wisdom of God was remaining in it was not known to be from God. When they met with truth, they met also with error; and both appeared to rest upon equal authority, and each was held with equal unsteadfastness and doubt. Not only truth was wanting, but truth in a revealed form; truth directly from God, sealed and authenticated by him, and that by an evidence easily comprehensible by all. "The wisdom of God" has supplied that grand desideratum. Its truths were revealed authoritatively, and therefore convincingly. While human teachers remained in the outward court, darkly investigating what might be hidden within that veil which hung before them, the "Teacher sent from God" rent that veil with his own mighty arm, and He who dwelt between the cherubim "shone forth." While they were gazing upon every dark form of error which flitted before them like the clouds of night, he came forth, and cried, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" and the credentials he bore were equal to this high declaration. The evidences of the divinity of the Gospel are as various as they are decisive. It is attested by the scattered fragments of truth in every land, and in every system; it grounds itself upon the feelings and wants of universal human nature; it brings its proofs from history, from prophecy, and from miracles; and, above all, it enters the heart with "the demonstration of the Holy Ghost and power." Thus, not only is an ample volume of facts and doctrines expanded before us, but it bears the signature of Heaven; the hand which unrolls it is Divine; and the world is awed by the high and solemn proclamation, "Thus saith the Lord."

2. Christianity is the wisdom of God, because it is a Divine contrivance to administer pardon to the guilty. This is peculiar to the Gospel Two facts are indisputable,—that every man, by some indication or other, confesses himself to be a sinner; and that, except on the great principle of the Gospel, faith in a divinely-appointed sacrifice, no one

has ever found assured peace to his conscience. The question, "What must I do to be saved?" has been sighed from every breast; but from what, except from Christianity, has its answer been obtained? The advocates of natural religion may take it to the temple of nature, and appear with that most serious inquiry before her oracle; but throughout her ample dome no accent is heard to give hope of pardon to the guilty. The worshippers of idols in modern and in ancient times have cried aloud to their Baal, from morning until evening, but there has been "neither voice nor sound;" and though they "cut themselves with knives," and offer "the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul," they enforce no answer. The very forms under which they have represented their deities is the standing evidence of the feelings under which they are contemplated by their votaries; for, though folly prompted their work, fear held the chisel and traced the fearful outline.

But, leaving the gods of gloom and despair, and supposing the most correct views of the moral perfections of God, we may confidently affirm, that the better God is known, the more hopeless must be the feelings of guilty man on the subject of the pardon of sins. Is he good? The very thought that you have abused that goodness, gives you, if truly penitent, the keenest sense of sin. Is he pure? Then in proportion to your sense of the intenseness of the holiness of his nature must be your consciousness that you are abhorrent to him, and offensive in his sight. Is he just? Then he guards his own laws, maintains his righteous authority, exacts of every one what is right, and distributes equally "glory, honour, and peace to every one that doeth good, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil."

What way, then, is left for escape? Surely none; and if any hope could be entertained, it would be so obviously a presumption resting on no assured ground, so dim and undefined, as to excite no comfort. But the wisdom of God here steps in and solves the difficulty, how God can be just, and yet justify sinners; how he can uphold authority, and yet release the confessed criminal; how he can maintain law, and not enforce it upon the offender. "A lamb is provided for a burnt offering," the Lamb of God. The incarnate Word becomes the piacular victim, the justice is executed upon him, and the mercy exerted upon us. Thus, by virtue of that consideration exhibited by the sufferings of a Being of unbounded merit, God is just when he justifies, and the problem which nothing else could solve is explained. The justice of God, that very attribute which presented itself to every consciously guilty man under the most fearful aspect, which, like the sword of the cherubim, turned every way to guard the tree of life, is now propitiated to man, and loses its fiery glare in the softest radiance of free and condescending mercy. Here the answer to the otherwise unanswerable question, "What shall I do to be saved?" is full and explicit: Christianity has opened the living way of faith in Christ crucified before the whole world of sinful men; and the Church of Christ, as though to contrast her cheerful confidence with the dark despair or uncertain hopes of all the world of wise or unwise, Jew or Greek, barbarian or Scythian, inscribed in her most ancient creed, and proclaims, wherever she chants her solemn services, the joyous sentiment, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

3. Christianity is the wisdom of God, because it is an efficient scheme for promoting personal and universal happiness.

To say, that man is miserable, is to repeat a great but a most obvious truth. It cannot be otherwise. Between sin and misery there is a necessary connection, because that connection is established by the decree of God himself: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." A diseased state of the vital organs might as well be supposed to exist without producing pain, as sin without sorrow. All the irregular appetites of sense, all the malignant and irascible passions, destroy the peace of the soul, and create hostile elements in society, fatal to its peace. Nor can sin be committed without inducing punishments, varied in degree, and frequently mitigated by mercy, but yet widely diffused, weighty, and terrible. There is often "a lighting down of the arm" of God in judgment, which proves to all, that "he is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, and that none ever hardened himself against God and prospered."

In this state of things, where is the cure for human wretchedness? What system but this can make even a plausible pretence to give happiness to the world? Many experiments have indeed been tried in ancient and modern times, to build up happy and peaceful societies; but all have failed. Arts, science, legislation, are held up, it is true, as having a natural tendency to mitigate the evils of society, and to increase the sum of social happiness. But ancient Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and modern China, are not destitute of these; and yet it may be doubted whether a thousand of their inhabitants, taken promiscuously, were not even less happy than an equal number of Hottentots, or any other totally uncivilized people. In modern times, and in Christian nations, we indeed see these external advantages connected with a milder, and, generally speaking, a happier state of society; but then we see them operating in connection with those moralizing effects which, more or less, in all nations, accompany Christianity. If arts, if sciences, if legislation, could restrain or cure the vices of the heart of man, they would in themselves promote his happiness; but since we see them not only disconnected in fact, but having no relation at all to man's internal moral state, and respecting his external condition only, the remedy for the miseries of the world cannot lie in them; and Christianity is that remedy provided by the benevolence of God, only because it is sanctifying. Its wisdom, then, is illustrated by this,—that, as human vice is the true source of human misery, it effects our happiness by the destruction of our vices. Pardon of sin is one of its great blessings; and yet, with all its value, but one. It is, indeed, one of its first and earliest; it stands at the head of its gifts to man; but it is placed there only to head and lead up a long and joyful train of principles and emotions which all flow from sanctity. Christianity would not have been "wisdom," had it not provided for man's happiness; and it could only provide for it by effecting his regeneration. Had it surrounded him with the most favourable external condition, and changed every thing but the moral man, and restored paradise itself, the breath of a polluted heart would have withered its bloom, and darkened its glory: if the whole earth had been at peace, a torn and distracted heart, a guilty and foreboding conscience, could have known no peace.

But the true remedy is provided. "The kindness of God toward man has appeared," not "in word," but "in power." Ours is not a religion of ordinances, but a religion of the heart; it is not even a palliative, but a cure. It tracks the stream of human misery to its source in our fallen nature, and purifies the fountain itself. Its sanative influence follows the moral disease through every vein it has envenomed, neutralizes the poison, and restores the vigour of the moral constitution.

Then the heart is at rest; then vital union, the only true source of peace to the soul of man, between God and man is restored; the charities and kind affections, "the fruits of the Spirit," spring forth from the renewed soil; then man lives to help and bless his fellows; and, in that principle of universal benevolence which it implants in all who are brought under its influence, provision is made for diffusing happiness throughout the world. This may be counteracted; it must have time and opportunity to develope itself; but the efficient remedy for the vice and misery of all nations lies there. The principle which no other religion has laid down, and which every other is too weak to enforce, even if it could have conceived it,—"No man liveth to himself," —will save the world. We see it already largely operating in charities which respect the wants of the body, and the higher charities which respect the interests of the immortal mind. It is this which founds schools, upholds the public exercise of the ministry at home; which translates the Holy Scriptures into the tongues of the whole earth, and spreads them before all nations; which organizes the societies that collect aid for missionary enterprises, and sends forth the messengers of the Churches to proclaim, in the seats of pagan darkness, the religion of light and mercy; and it will carry the message of God's mercy to a fallen world far as the habitations of man are extended, and peace and joy attend its steps. In every place it preaches "liberty to the captive;" it "binds up the broken-hearted;" it "comforts them that mourn." It is the publication of "the acceptable year of the Lord;" it is "peace on earth, and good will to men."

II. The second proposition in the text is, that Christianity is "the wisdom of God in a mystery."

The apostle here probably alludes to the celebrated mysteries of paganism. These are supposed to have originated in Egypt, and from thence were transmitted to the Greeks, and through them to the Romans. They may be in few words explained. The pagan priesthood in many places pretended to be in possession of a higher and purer doctrine than that which they publicly taught, and which was popularly received. This they kept from the vulgar, under the plea that they were too base and impure to be entrusted with it. It was, therefore, to use the phrase of the text, "hidden wisdom." But to princes and some other distinguished and favoured persons it was occasionally communicated. The "initiated" had, however, to undergo severe penances; scenic symbolic representations in caverns, and in the night, were the means adopted for unfolding the secret; and these, and other ceremonial circumstances, were employed, to inspire the greater awe, and to enforce that pledge of secrecy which confined the knowledge, whatever it might be, to the chosen few.

What was thus taught, the learned are not agreed. Probably this secret doctrine contained a considerable portion of the ancient and

purer theology; and so the whole was in proof of the apostle's words, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." This truth, however, it is likely, was even in the mysteries often mingled with fables, and veiled in allegory. Whatever of wisdom the mysteries contained, the benefit was confined to few. They were, however, the subjects of great boasting among the wiser heathen; and it is in reference to them that the apostle calls Christianity "the wisdom of God in a mystery."

In thus designating the religion he taught, and yet at the same time exhibiting it in a contrast which claims superiority, he supposes in it some points both of resemblance and contrast with the mysteries of paganism.

1. He supposes points of resemblance; but even the resemblances are implied contrasts. They are such as that which exists between the sun and a common fire; which at once calls our thoughts from what is common to both, to the contrast exhibited between the foul and darkened blaze of the one, and the pure and unsullied light of the other

Christianity was connected with a long series of symbolic, and, if you please, scenic representations, running through the previous ages of the patriarchal and Jewish history, of which sacred mysteries it was at once the accomplishment and the exposition. Typical personages, typical ceremonies, and typical things, kings, priests, temples, cities, mountains, sacrifices, and altars, passed in succession, and exhibited in parabolic action, or the language of emblem, its glory or its grace, the voluntary abasement or the official elevation and dominion, of its great Author.

It retained some figurative rites of its own, as well as fulfilled those of former dispensations. Its baptism signifies the washing away of sin, and the renewal of the soul by the Holy Ghost. Its eucharist not only commemorates a fact,—the sacrificial death of Christ; not only "shows forth his death until he come;" but explains the purpose of that death, and the means by which it becomes beneficial to the soul, by that application of it to give life to the soul, and nourishment and strength to all holy principles, by the instrumentality of faith. Its Sabbath is the symbol of the rest from sin which follows upon the sanctifying influence of its truth, when fully exerted upon the soul; and the still richer, deeper rest which remaineth for the people of God in the heavenly world.

Christianity is a mystery, too, because in its true meaning, it is hidden from the profane, and from all who prepare not themselves to receive it by a previous discipline. But its discipline is not like theirs, —some foolish bodily austerity, or onerous ceremonies;—it is the discipline of humility and prayer. "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God." They are "hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes,"—to persons of a docile spirit; for "the secret of the Lord is only with them that fear him," and to them exclusively "he shows his covenant."

And if it was a character of the ancient mysteries to produce deep impressions of awe and reverence upon those who were admitted to them, the parallel will still hold good. Without investigating the means by which these emotions were produced by the mysteries of paganism, we must allow them to be salutary feelings whenever associated with sacred subjects. Religion has an awful grandeur, but no where is i

displayed so impressively as in the Gospel. Condescending as the religion of Christ is, it never descends from its own place, nor permits us to rise above ours. Plain as are its doctrines, as they relate to practice, and clear as are the terms in which they are stated, yet they often transcend both human and angelic intellect; and become, as to their reasons, "hidden wisdom;" and acquire, from their height and depth, the impressive solemnity of mysteries. Mysteries of majesty are in the perfections of the Deity, which it at once veils and unveils; mysteries of condescension in the incarnation, mysteries of love in our Saviour's passion, and mysteries of inscrutable wisdom in his providential government. The awe deepens as we gaze upon all these subjects, and as they disclose their heights and depths to the inquiring thought; and it is rendered still more solemn as we approach the scenes of the final jugdment, and contemplate those results which shall fill eternity itself with ecstasy or horror.

But if for these very partial resemblances to the celebrated mysteries of paganism, Christianity might be called "hidden wisdom," "the wisdom of God in a mystery;" it presents also,

2. Points of interesting and direct contrast. The mysteries of paganism were, for the most part, mysteries by artifice; the mysteries of Christianity are mysteries by nature and necessity. The bottom of this ocean is not discovered, not because the waters are muddy, but because they are deep.

In the pagan mysteries truths, in their nature plain and comprehensible, were often hidden in doubtful enigmas; in Christianity, nothing is mysterious but what is so by the appointment of Him who hides that from us which is unfit for us to know, or from the necessary magnitude of the objects, which often stretch infinitely beyond the field of our intellectual vision. The glorying of St. Paul was in his "plainness of speech;" and he claims this for himself and his coadjutors, that they renounced "the hidden things of dishonesty," and, "by manifestation of the truth, commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

The impression produced upon the initiated was the result greatly of trick and artifice; and the quality, so to speak, of that awe produced by the pagan mysteries, entirely diverse from that which is inspired by "the deep things of God." Through the senses and imagination paganism has ever aimed at bringing the spirit of man into bondage, and its darkness has ever been charged with horrors which have prostrated the mind under the dominion of the most disquieting superstitions. But "the mysteries of godliness" at once humble and exalt; and while they inspire fear, elevate, strengthen, and sanctify. Abraham feels that he is but dust and ashes in the presence of Jehovah; and yet is emboldened "to speak unto God," and present his requests. Moses "exceedingly fears and quakes;" and yet puts up the boldest prayer that ever escaped human lips: "Lord, I beseech thee show me thy glory." John falls at the feet of his glorified Saviour as "one dead;" but the resplendent Being before whose majesty he faints lays his right hand upon him, and says unto him, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last."

But the grand point of opposition is, that the mysteries of paganism, whatever wisdom was "hidden" in them, were for the few; those of

Christianity, for all. "To make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery."

From the former, the poor were systematically excluded. To be poor was to be profane; and, "Hence, ye profane!" was the harsh sound which drove the vulgar herd from the very entrances of their places of exclusive sanctity. No false religion, no corrupt form of true religion, has ever welcomed the poor to a common participation of its supposed benefits. The poor find mercy no where but in the Gospel. This will explain the words of Christ: "Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." The last appears a strange evidence of a Divine commission; nor could it have been urged as such an evidence, unless to care for the soul had been as rare and wonderful as to heal the sick by miracle and to raise the dead. It was so in fact. The Jewish teachers contemned the poor and the outcast; they made it a matter of sarcastic reproach that our Lord ate with publicans and sinners, and that they who followed him were in humble circumstances; and contemptuously asked, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" "The people," said the Pharisees, "know not the law, and are accursed;" and thus they despised those whom they ought to have pitied, with as much unfeelingness and pride, as the Gentile philosopher, the mass of the vulgar. Well then may we accept it as a proof that the mission of our Lord was from God, from him who "accepteth no man's person," from him who "fashioneth all men alike," and who is "loving to every man,"—that he preached the Gospel to the poor. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost;" and when misery and danger were the most pressing, his mercy appeared to flow with greatest liberality.

And here one cannot but remark the perfect accordance which exists between the proud spirit of infidel philosophy, and that which characterized the ancient paganism and the corrupted religion of the Jews. Voltaire, in one of his letters to the infidel Frederic of Prussia, exclaims, "Give us the princes and the philosophers, and we freely leave the lower class to the fishermen and tent makers." Thank God there have ever been fishermen and tent makers, sufficiently inspired with the spirit of their Master to take the legacy. Wherever true Christianity is known and has influence, there the poor have still the Gospel preached to them; man's common origin from "one blood" is acknowledged, and the equal share of all in the virtue of a common redemption.

III. The third proposition in the text is, that this "wisdom of God in a mystery" was "ordained before the world to glory."

In this clause there are several points of interest.

1. Christianity was ordained, prepared, or appointed, "before the world."

We hear sometimes of its invention by man, and of many things appended to it: by human authority we acknowledge that things invented have been added. But these are no parts of the system itself; and we may ask, When was that invented? And what human mind first devised its leading fundamental principles?—that man is a fallen, guilty, helpless being, who can be saved only through the merits of a divinely appointed, and a Divine sacrifice for sin, and restored to purity

and peace only by that power of God by which he was at first created. These are its chief doctrines; and when shall we fix their discovery? Near eighteen centuries ago we find them in the sermons of Christ and the writings of his apostles. Ages before that, the prophets held out to fallen, guilty men, as the subject of their loftiest anticipations and most impressive visions, the appearance of Messiah, to be "cut off, but not for himself;" to be wounded for our transgressions, and then to enter upon his grand appointment as the Mediator between God and man, in order to reconcile the world to its offended Sovereign.—Shall we ascend higher, to the transactions of Mount Sinai? There a guilty race, conscious of transgression, trembled before the awful Majesty it had offended; and there an institution was, by Divine authority, appointed, founded on the same principle as that which distinguishes Christianity,—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Go beyond the flood; and the antediluvian sacrifices teach the same doctrine. And, finally, fix your attention on the pair in paradise, standing convicted and trembling before their Judge: they were the first who needed pardon; but did they devise the means of obtaining it? Was it for the guilty to prescribe to their offended God the terms on which he should admit them again to favour? That, indeed, it were absurd to allow; and if so, those means were the result of his own wisdom and mercy; the whole scheme of the redemption of the fallen and guilty race sprung from the bosom of his compassion, and shot forth the first mild ray which broke upon the darkness of man's sad condition, in that great promise which formed the steadfast ground of the hope of the first ages, "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

2. It was "ordained before the world," as a perfect and efficient plan for human recovery, and was thus prepared in all its parts, nothing being wanting, to meet the necessity of the case of man's lapse into guilt and danger, at the moment it should arise.

That was a critical moment when man first sinned. But for such a preordained system of mercy all had then been lost, and the first step of man out of a state of innocence would have landed him in irretrievable ruin. When the hand of the offender was upon the prohibited tree, and a human creature first violated the authority of the Divine command, "earth,"—says the poet of paradise,—

> "Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of wo,
> That all was lost."

This is poetry; but it would have been fact, if this scheme of wisdom and love united had not been prepared. Nature must have sunk to nothingness, man been hurled into the gulf where death itself ever lives, and his race have perished with him. Over the precipice he was indeed hurled by his aggravated offence; but the compassion of his God, in the sovereign exercise of his grace, had anticipated the case; mercy caught him in his fall, revealed that love which had surrendered the eternal Word to bear, "in the fulness of time," his sin "in his own body on the tree," and bade him believe and live. For us too the same mercy, in every principle on which it is founded, and in every application for which it is needed, stands "ordained" or pre-

pared. We have no need to ask, under the pressure of guilt, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" The ransom is paid down; and we have only to claim the actual redemption: the propitiation is offered, accepted, and exhibited; and we have only to "behold the Lamb of God,"—to believe and be saved.

3. It was ordained before the world "to our glory," for the moral advancement of the human race.

It finds us in degradation and shame; no words can paint our moral wretchedness, till the Gospel comes in to our help. It finds us wholly ignorant, or walking by the insufficient light of human science, too dim to direct our steps,—a faint meteor-like coruscation, which leaves the surrounding gloom unbroken: it brings us to the feet of Him "who spake as never man spake;" of Him who has so truly said, "I am the light of the world; if any man follow me, he shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." It finds us subject to the shameful bondage of sense and passion; and it sets us upon the honourable throne of self government and moral dominion. It finds the powers of an immortal mind possessed and polluted by the evil spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience: it expels the unholy usurper, and gives back the spirit to the healing and hallowing influence of God. It invests us with the privileges of "sons of God," gives us access to his throne of grace, and confers a covenant right both to pray and to be heard by him; it brings us under his eye, his hand, his wing, his care, his jealousy, his love, his vindication. It gives even our mortal dust an interest in the great redemption; for even that shall be raised again at the last day; and on that day the glory which it has ordained for man shall be completed, for publicly shall the Church be acknowledged, publicly presented to the Father, and publicly received, crowned with "glory, honour, and immortality."

But it is time that we make a practical application of the whole.

Is this wisdom of God the subject of your daily investigation?

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Sermon XVI.—*The Building of the Temple.*

"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee a house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare (or establish) their heart unto thee," 1 Chronicles xxix, 14–18.

One of the most interesting acts of ancient national piety is the erection of that splendid temple at Jerusalem, which is usually called the temple of Solomon; but for which David, as appears from this

chapter, made large preparations. David projected it, set his heart upon it, gave liberally himself toward its erection, and by his influence engaged every Israelite to be a cheerful contributor.

But it is not only as a place for national worship that this edifice merits notice. It had two other purposes worthy of that best age of the Jewish history, and of its illustrious founders. It was to exhibit, on a larger and grander scale than the tabernacle, those glorious types and scenic representations of "good things to come," which were to keep up the expectation of the perfect evangelic dispensation, till the Lord of the temple himself should come, and lead the way into the holy places not made with hands. It was also erected to invite, by its very name and glory, the people of all surrounding nations to come and worship the true God. It had its magnificent court of the Gentiles, and it was called "a house of prayer for all people."

The temple was also one of the most illustrious types. It was a type of Christ himself. "Destroy this temple," said he, referring to his body, "and in three days I will build it up again." He was the true mercy seat, the true glory, the ample refuge of both Jew and Gentile who fly to God for pardon and acceptance. But it was eminently the type of his Church; that house of prayer for all people; that consecrated residence of God upon earth; that city set upon a hill, to be conspicuous; that Zion whence the Lord commands his blessing, even life for evermore. Of this fact the prophets are full; and it supplied their favourite figure. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," Isaiah ii, 2, 3. St. Paul expresses himself in a similar manner where he says, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," Ephesians ii, 19–22.

You will see, then, the connection between the text and the occasion which has assembled us. If I see in the preparations for building the temple a resemblance to the efforts of the present day to build the universal Church of God, and to spread her consecrated shade over all nations, I am indulging in no fancy. The one was the type of the other. The Holy Spirit himself has established the analogy; and the important principles laid down by David in the text, as applicable to the work immediately before him, are for this reason, as well as from their general nature, most instructive and admonitory to us. I call your attention, then,

I. To the hallowed and interesting work in which we are engaged; to build the temple, the Church of God, the house of prayer for all people.

1. The great object of the building which the piety of David pro-

jected is expressed generally, and in a most emphatic manner, in the text. It was to be a house for the holy name of God. This is the precise office of the Christian Church. From the beginning it has been so; and wherever it extends, there it is "a house for thine holy name."

The Church proclaims that name as the only name of Divinity.—"There are gods many, and lords many, to you," is its language in all pagan lands; "but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him," 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6. "The gods of the heathen are vanity, but the Lord made the heaven."

The Church exalts the name of God above all the supposed deities of men. It is indeed a name above every name that is named; for the very attributes of God fill the mind with thoughts which never entered into a heathen at all, or, at the best, very partially and obscurely: such as eternity; while their deities had birth and beginning;—self existence; while theirs were supposed to be from fate, or some other cause;—almighty; so as to make all things out of nothing; of which they had no conception;—omnipresence; while the gods of the heathen are circumscribed;—unchangeableness; while they were the sport of passion and caprice. There are also his moral perfections; and these are displayed in their glory wherever the Church proclaims his name: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."

And it is a holy name which is so proclaimed and exalted. Of the polluted and polluting idols of the heathen, well might David say, "Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer; nor take their name upon my lips." But God is glorious in holiness; his name is holy; his worship, his law, his Church, his heaven, are holy; and without holiness no man shall see him. Thus it is by the Church now, as by the temple of old, that the holy name of God is published, the beauty of holiness exhibited, and holiness enforced upon men.

2. The temple was the place of authorized and accepted sacrifice.

Our Lord determined that in his discourse with the woman of Samaria: "Salvation is of the Jews." Such is the Church now. Its blood is the blood of Christ; its Priest is the High Priest of our profession; the way to its holiest of all has been opened by him. There is the true mercy seat; there the glory; the ministration of justification exceeding in glory the ministration of death. Was it an interesting work to set up only the types of all these? So much so, that David prepared "all this store;" and the people offered willingly; and all Israel caught the hallowed ardour. But how much more interesting is it to exhibit the reality of all this! And this you do by building the Church of God in heathen lands. Wherever the Church is, Jesus is preached; and he is the seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head; the desire of all nations, the hope of Israel, the light of the Gentiles, the Lamb of God, led to the slaughter, and wounded for our transgressions; whose blood has made the universal atonement, and purchased pardon to be freely given, and grace to be abundantly administered, to men of every nation under heaven; to the Jew and to the Gentile, to the best and worst of mankind, for there is no difference. What glad tidings of great joy are here, which shall be to all people!

3. The temple was the place of united worship, and of united blessing.

It is indeed most interesting to observe, that while the Jewish covenant lasted, which made an outward and civil distinction between the seed of Abraham and the Gentiles, there was nevertheless an approach to that unity which was more perfectly to take place under the Gospel. If a middle wall of partition was still standing, they were at least under one roof; and that roof the shadow of the temple of the same God. They were instructed in the same law, they had access to the same God in prayer, and they received the same answers to prayer, according to the inspired supplication of Solomon at the dedication: "Moreover, concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched-out arm; if they come and pray in this house, then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name," 2 Chron. vi, 32, 33. And that the pious Gentile received as large a share of spiritual blessings as did the Jew, is clear from the Roman centurion, of whom Jesus testified, that he "had not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Such is the spiritual temple, the Church of Christ. It places all men on a spiritual equality, and offers to all the same blessing. What wretched distinctions has the pride of man's heart made between nation and nation, between rank and rank, between the castes of India, and the negro of the West Indies and his master, between white and black! But they are all dissipated by Christianity. "Come in," says this benevolent religion, to every poor, oppressed, despised creature under heaven; nay, what is more, to every penitent sinner, standing afar off, and not daring to draw near; "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without? Here is a common Saviour, and a common salvation!"

4. It was the place of actual communion between God and man.

That temple was not a void and vacant one. In an eminent sense, God was there. All who went to worship drew near to God; and through the high priest they had communion with God. There was nothing like this in the whole world beside. You might travel through Egypt, and Babylon, and the other great and mighty nations of the earth; but you could find no other place where men had such access to God. There God dwelt; and there he conversed with man. Do you not see in this splendid type the glorious office of the Christian Church; to put a place in every land where God will converse with man? Where else does God commune with men? Where beside has he fixed his throne of mercy? Where else does he bestow pardons, receive prayers, and distribute spiritual blessings? Not, certainly, in those foul temples of idolatry to which thousands of benighted pagans resort.—They are temples of devils. Not in Jewish synagogues; for there is neither sacrifice nor mercy seat. Not in Mohammedan mosques; for can the holy God ally himself to the impurities and falsehoods of the prophet of imposture? It is in Zion, then, that God is known; and in her palaces only is he known for a refuge. On the one hand, how gloomy is the scene! Track the fairest, amplest countries of our world;

and there is not a place where God holds communion with man, and man with God! All is void of God, and filled with evil and misery.—On the other hand, there is in a few places of the earth his Church; and there God is. All who seek him there find him in grace, mercy, and peace. What do we, then, in enlarging this Church? We fill this awful void in our world with God. We set up his throne; and he deigns to sit upon it. We bring God down to man; and show to man the way to God. A blessed service this, to strengthen the stakes, and lengthen the cords, of the Zion in which God will rest for ever; and where he speaks in mercy to his creatures, and permits their access to him at all times and in every thing that concerns them!

Such is our work; and one more noble and benevolent cannot be conceived. Let us consider,

II. The sentiments of deep abasement with which the circumstance of being permitted to take a part in it impressed the mind of the venerable monarch who had made such large preparations for its completion. "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?"

From this language we learn, that the very honour of being employed in a work of God ought to be deeply abasing to man. This is an important consideration. The work of God is too sacred for human boasting. The vanity of that mean passion harmonizes not with it; and it is all in mercy to us that God so employs man, that no flesh may glory in his presence.

With reference to that work in which we are permitted to take a part, and of which the building of the temple was the type, there are three views suggested by these questions, which may well humble us. "What am I, and what is my people?"

1. What are we with reference to our former selves? We are not "just men, who need no repentance." We are not a race of beings who, like the angels, have kept their first estate, and to whom it would be congruous to be ministers of the Divine bounty, presenting unstained channels through which the grace of God might flow to a guilty world. No: we are, at best, but pardoned criminals; and have a long and sad retrospect of ingratitude and disobedience. "What is my people?" That question would call up the remembrance of all their gainsaying, and grieving of the Holy One of Israel; the humbling history of the wilderness, and of subsequent years. And "what am I?" Could that question be put by David without calling to mind the wreck of his early piety when a shepherd, making the wilderness resound with his harp and sacred songs, by the corrupting manners of a court? Thought he not of the matter of Uriah? Deeply repented of, and graciously forgiven, it is true; but not surely forgotten. And we may each ask, "Who am I?" Every heart will give the answer; but the recollection of sins committed, and mercies unimproved, and grievings of the Spirit, and unworthy returns for abounding grace, will create in us all, if we are rightly affected, a deep admiration of our present position. We, even we, are the redeemed of the Lord; his people, his Church; and even we, being converted, are bidden to strengthen our brethren.

2. What are we, in reference to our associates in this work? To be associated in any pursuit with the great and distinguished of the world, ourselves being little and unknown, might produce that humbling

surprise, expressed in the exclamation, "What am I?" But we put aside all that the world calls great and illustrious; we chase away the phantoms of earthly creation, elevated beyond all proportion by the delusive refractions of an earthly atmosphere; and for false greatness, give you that which is true.

Think, in the work of building and extending the Church of God, of the thousands of the pious into whose fellowship you come; the hallowed band overlooked by the world, but dear to Christ. What tears do they this moment shed over human misery; what sacrifices are they making, even in poverty, for this blessed cause; what delightful emotions of hope swell their benevolent bosoms, while they anticipate the joyous days and brighter scenes of the Redeemer's dominion! What fervent prayers, "Come, Lord Jesus, and come quickly," call him from the skies! "Who, then, am I," that I join this chosen race; that I have communion with them; that I am allowed to deepen their sympathy, to partake their hope, to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice, in such a cause, and for such results? Venerable men, pale with those studies the fruit of which was the transfusion of the word of God into the modern tongues of men; restless evangelists of a former age, by whose preaching Christendom was filled with the sound of salvation; imprisoned confessors, bound that the word of God might not be bound; martyrs, smiling in tortures, who died that this truth might live, and give life to the world; am I associated with you? "What am I? and what is my people?"

Fathers of the Christian Church! names never to be blotted from her records, who attached yourselves to your Master's cause when a vain philosophy would have torn from his brow the diadem of his Divinity, and counted that precious blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins as a common thing;—apostles! especially Paul the aged, in labours more abundant, in painfulness, in watchings, in stripes, in bonds, in deaths oft, to make all men see the fellowship of this mystery of love and salvation;—prophets! who all turned aside from falling empires, and the sublime sweeps of that judicial desolation of nations which marked your day, to see this great sight, and to be entranced with the glories of Messiah's future kingdom of grace and peace;—angels, that excel in strength, to whose ken all the splendours of nature lie exposed; who yet turn from heaven's most stupendous scenes to that to you more stupendous scene, God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; whose highest joy is when a sinner repenteth, and whose delightful employ it is to forward this work, whether by leading an apostle from prison, personating "a man of Macedonia," crying, "Come over, and help us," or ministering to the heirs of salvation, whether found in Africa, the Indies, or the pole; who flutter over negro huts and Indian cottages;—is it with you we have fellowship?

Above all, is it with thee, O Saviour, who, having once offered thy soul a sacrifice for sin, now seest thy seed, prolongest thy days, prosperously fulfillest the pleasure of the Lord, hast thy portion with the great, and dividest the spoil with the strong; do we go with thee into the wilderness to seek the lost? Do we share thy reproach? Do we partake thy triumphs? "Lord, what are we, and what is our people?"

3. What are we with reference to our actual contributions to this

work? Let the text answer: "All things come of thee; and of thine own have we given thee. All this store cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own." Thus is boasting excluded. What is it thou hast given, or hast prepared to give? Art thou rich; and canst say, "All this store have we prepared to build a house for thy holy name?" Remember it cometh of his hand,—his blessing upon your health, your labour, your ingenuity; and is all his own. Are you poor? It is of his hand that you are not the poorest, and of his mercy that he accepts your humble offering. The law of Moses enjoined benevolence upon all the people. If they were not able to bring costly offerings, they were to present a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

Is it time that you offer? It comes of his hand. That you live, is from him. Who was it, when the voice of a stern justice was heard saying, "Cut it down," that uttered that affectionately pleading intercession, "Spare it yet another year?" Is it talents that you offer? All things come of God. You have influence from him, who gave you rank in society. Knowledge is from him, who teacheth wisdom; for if there is a spirit in man, God breathed it; and his inspiration giveth man understanding. Your eloquence in his cause is from him, according to the promise made to Moses, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say," Exod. iv, 12. "Of thine own have we given thee." Nay, we may go farther. Do you offer life? Such is the offering of the martyr, and often of the missionary. Yet let both the martyr and the missionary, the one in his fire, and the other in his fever, lay his hand upon his mouth, and say, "Of thine own have we given thee." That life is a redeemed life; the very terms on which, O thou suffering messenger of our Churches, thou becamest a Christian, was, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord." Boasting is excluded. Let no flesh glory in his presence. Say, after you have done all,—after you have given, and laboured, and died,—"We are but unprofitable servants."

III. The text supplies a consideration calculated powerfully to quicken our exertions in every department of the work of God, which may by his mercy be assigned to us: "We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow; and there is none abiding;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, there is no "expectation."

This is mournful; but that is not the effect which it was designed to produce. Man is not to grieve at the appointments of God; and assuredly those frequent representations of the vanity of life were not given to excite only a transient poetic sentimentality; but to urge to immediate and rapid action. There is poetry in the Bible; but take care of poetry in religion. If we are making haste to die, we should also make haste to live. This is the moral.

This reflection on the uncertain and shadowy character of our existence in this world, in the connection in which it stands in the text, reminds us,

1. That what we do, we must do quickly. We are strangers, passing through this world; not belonging to it. We are sojourners; travelling through, and setting up our tents, not our permanent dwellings. This is no accident, a case likely to be altered. We are sojourners

and strangers, "as were all our fathers." It is the law of our fallen state, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return."

"And our days are as a shadow;" but the shadow, not the substance of being: or, as a vapour, dispersed by every breath of air; always changing its form; rapidly dissipated. We are strangers not long from home; sojourners, who rapidly finish their journey; wayfaring men, who turn aside to tarry but for a night; and there is no "expectation," no "abiding." What thou doest, do quickly. Youth, your bloom begins to fade. Persons mature in age, your strength begins to tremble. Aged people, there is but a step between you and death. The temple may be built, and you have no share in the labour. Its foundations may be laid, and you give it no blessing; and its top-stone may be brought forth, and you not join in the shouting. "This man," it may be said, in the hour of judgment, "never did any work for God!"

We are reminded,

2. That what we do for others must be done quickly.

For are we the only strangers and sojourners before God? Look at the crowds which pass you in your busy streets. Cast up the population of Europe; plunge among the countless millions of India and China. They are all strangers and sojourners; their days on earth are as a shadow, and there is no "expectation," no "delay." They are hastening onward; and death and the grave are moving toward them. Under what affecting views does this consideration place our fellow men; and especially those of them who are living, or rather dying, in the darkness of paganism! They are indeed "strangers;" but they know no better home. No word of reconciliation has opened to them a vista through the grave, and brought to light the distant immortality. They are sojourners too, and see the frailty of their tents; and often shudder while they hear the rents of their canvass flapping in the midnight wind; but no Redeemer has cheered them with the hope of a continuing city; and said to them, "In my Father's house are many mansions." You are indeed strangers with a home in prospect; they are strangers and sojourners without one. What a shadow to them is life! With us, indeed, it may be somewhat substantiated, by its connection with religion and eternity. To them its discipline is not referred to correction; its changeful scenes carry no moral lesson; its afflictions, no humility; its blessings, no hope. O pity your fellow sojourners in travel, without food, without the cheering impulse of a home, in depressing heartlessness, and painful anxiety! Around your camp, as around that of the Israelites, the manna falls: invite them to it. The Rock has been smitten for you, and follows all your steps with its pure stream. Call, shout to them, lest they perish, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" Bid them behold your pillar of fire by night, and cloud by day, and join your camp, that they may have the same blessed guidance. Show them your altars, the smoke of your atonement; bid them come up to your tabernacle; and make them know that the desert of life itself may be cheered with songs, songs of salvation, even in the house of their pilgrimage; and that, although here they have no continuing city, they may seek and find one to come.

3. But there is still another and equally impressive consideration connected with this reflection upon the brevity and insecurity of human

life. It is, that, short and uncertain as life is, within its narrow space works of infinite importance may nevertheless be done; works which shall live when life itself shall die, and its vapour be for ever dissipated. "What am I," says David, "and what is my people, that we should build a house for thy holy name? For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners:" intimating that even they who were so rapidly passing through a brief existence were yet permitted to do a work which in its effects should last for ever.

No subject ought to impress us more than this. In one view, indeed, life is as a shadow; in another, a solemn reality. Under one aspect it sinks into nothing in comparison with eternity, and ought to be held with a loose hand; but in another, O grasp it fast! Seize every moment; for it is eternity itself in embryo; and in its effects it never dies.

Apply this to your own personal conduct. In life we sow, in eternity we reap. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "If we sow to the flesh," living sinfully and carelessly, in the spirit of the world, we shall reap "corruption." All shall fade and perish, and leave you eternally poor and wretched, without a foundation, a treasure, a home, a heaven, and a smiling God. But if we "sow to the Spirit;" if penitence, if faith, if love, persevering holiness, be our practice; we shall reap a peaceful death, a glorious resurrection, a public acquittal at judgment, an immortality of bliss. You all sow; you are sowing every moment.—Stop, busy sowers, and ask, "What am I doing? What seed am I throwing in? if to the flesh, corruption; if to the Spirit, life everlasting?"

Apply this to your great work of building the temple of God in distant lands. It is true, that you are strangers and sojourners; but what is the work which God by his grace enables you to do! Such were David and Solomon; and yet they set up a house where myriads worshipped, and were trained up for heaven. Such were St. Paul and the first preachers; yet they opened the living streams of salvation, which to this day make glad the city of our God. Such were our blessed reformers; yet they gave a blow to the beast which never can be healed, and filled our land with a light which never can be darkened. Such were the earliest examples of missionary zeal in later ages.—Long have they departed; the shadow is vanished; the pilgrims have reached another land; but the immortal work survives, and blesses millions. The same spirit, however, in various degrees, rests on you. Scatter your seed of evangelical truth in yon desert waste of Africa, and of India. God shall bless the springing thereof; he shall water its ridges, and settle its furrows, and make it soft with showers; and when you are gone home to God, thousands shall return with gladness, bringing the sheaves of the harvest with them. O honour conferred on short-lived man, to set up a house for God in distant lands, which shall never be forsaken: where incense and a pure offering shall ascend to God while the sun and moon endure; where sin shall be pardoned, the wretched comforted, and colony after colony shall be sent forth from earth to heaven, to meet you in that day when they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down with you in the kingdom of God!

IV. In all works undertaken for God, we are taught by the text to be mindful of the principle from which they flow: "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness."

If at all times the eye of God is upon us, and he pondereth our goings, how much more may we expect him to require truth in the inward parts when we put forth our hands openly in his service, and proclaim our zeal for his glory, by the enlargement of his kingdom in the world! God trieth the heart; and happy is he who can, with David, appeal to God, and say, "In the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things." To be upright, signifies, to be conformable to an existing rule or standard; and, in a moral sense, to be conformable to the will or law of God. That law, with reference to the exercises of religious charity, has various parts; and, taken together, they constitute uprightness. Let us briefly enumerate them.

There is the law of sincere intention. To this we must conform.—If, when we eat or drink, we are to do all to his glory, much more, when we build his Church, are we to aim at his praise.

The law of grateful return. To him how unspeakably are we indebted! Ours is the Church; its altar, its sacrifice, its calm refuge from the cares and distractions of the world. I owe to God; but to God I cannot pay. My righteousness extendeth not to him; but he commands me to make the return to others. In this, then, to be upright, we must recognize our own obligations; and regard our acts of service to men, not as favours we confer on them, but as grateful acknowledgments for what we have received from God. We claim not your applause, ye wretched negroes, idolaters, and slaves of superstition, error, and sin; "the love of Christ constraineth us;" and for his sake we are debtors to Jew and Greek, "both to the wise and the unwise."

The law of faithfulness. It is required of stewards, that they be found faithful. Such is our character. We are stewards of manifold grace; powers of doing good both at home and abroad; to the bodies and souls of men. God has made us channels of this grace; and when he bids us distribute, uprightness demands that we do it instantly, and fulfil the intention of the Lord of all.

The law of liberality. "Freely ye have received, freely give." As ye have received mercy, show mercy. The Lord "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not;" "be ye followers of God as beloved children."

The law of cheerful distribution. He that "showeth mercy" is to do it "with cheerfulness;" "not grudgingly; for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. To what a noble elevation is the Christian raised by the words, "Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect; for he maketh the sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust!" Christians, when ye are thus perfect, upright, you are as clouds of blessing, and the clear shining of the sun after rain; the sun shining on all; and the cloud shaken by the wind, and pouring its copious and fertilizing showers upon the thirsty ground.

The law of perseverance. "Be not weary in well doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." Set this law of uprightness before you in all your doings, and in all your givings.

V. Lastly, we have the joyous and benevolent feelings of the aged

monarch, when he saw the people assembled so willingly to offer in so blessed a work: "And now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee."

Certainly this was a joyous sight; one of the most joyous that earth has presented to the eye of piety: a whole people pressing with their willing and liberal offerings; a nation assembled to do an act for the honour of the holy name of God, and echoing the pious and humble sentiments of their monarch, abased before the majesty of the Lord.—It was a scene for angels to behold; and the more interesting, as a type of what they behold now, and what they will, ere long, behold on a larger scale,—the Church of God, the spiritual Israel, all united in one greater work, and all offering willingly to spread the shelter of God's spiritual house over all lands, and to set up a house of prayer for all people.

This work is begun. Our crowds of willing offerers are the blessed pledges of the time when all Israel shall catch the sacred flame; but, so far as it extends, may we not all take up the words, and share the emotions of David: "And now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present, offer willingly unto thee?"

It is a joyful sight, as a declaration of faith. Faith in God's word, as to the spiritual dangers of men; faith in his laws, that he requires us to be diligent and profitable servants; faith in his promises, that he will be with us, and second our work; faith in prophecies, which declare the universal spread of true religion; faith, which leaves sense to measure the length and breadth of difficulties, to stand aghast at dark and threatening clouds, to tremble at the rolling of papal or of pagan wrath, and darts into those sweet and peaceful scenes of light and blessedness beyond, and sees all the families of the earth blessed in Christ, and all nations calling him blessed.

It is joyful, as a declaration of lofty and truly Christian benevolence. For Christian philanthropy is lofty, and it is boundless. It is peculiar, and distinct from every thing else which bears that name, and most nearly approaches it. It has a higher source,—"the love of God shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto us." It contemplates man under a loftier aspect; regarding not only his poverty, his diseases, his oppressions, but his soul's welfare, and his connection with eternity. It has an ampler rule,—the example of Christ: witness those wondrous words of St. John, "Because Christ laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." So do martyrs, ministers, missionaries, and all who shorten their days in promoting the spiritual interests of mankind. It more perfectly breaks down all the disgraceful bounds of prejudice. It regards not nation, colour, or condition; it fixes on man as the creature of God, as the purchase of Christ, as a fellow in a common danger, as a sharer in a common salvation.

It is a joyful sight, as it opens the gate of the most splendid and delightful hopes. What has been effected, and what is still effecting, by that small part of the Church which now presents itself before the Lord! What light breaks upon the gloom of ages, and the gloom of millions! What sweet and refreshing verdure springs up in the desert!

What sounds of praise fall upon our ears from negro huts and Indian cottages; the hum of schools where heathen children read of Christ; the happy families that have been created by Christian truth and renewing grace; the eye of age lighted up with celestial scenes; the bed of death made soft with hope! "Where?" say you? Wherever you have made the attempt. When all the Churches shall unite, when the number is multiplied, and all offer willingly, then, indeed, shall the top-stone be brought with shouting; and then shall the Christian Church stand beauteous in its architecture, ample as the earth in its sweep, pure from defilement; God and man shall there meet in constant worship; and all nations shall flow unto it, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, showing forth the praises of him who hath brought them out of darkness into marvellous light. Yes; "this shall be his rest for ever. Here will he dwell; for he hath desired it. He will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread. There will he make the horn of his Anointed to bud. Her walls shall be salvation, and her gates praise." O well may we say, with such an end in view, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers," God of Paul, of Luther, of faithful evangelists in all ages,—"keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee."

SERMON XVII.—*Excitements to Missionary Effort.*

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good," Ecclesiastes xi, 1–6.

THIS portion of the wisdom of the wisest of mere men is devoted to the inculcation of a lesson which, shame to our nature, we are often slow to learn,—the inculcation of benevolence. The particular kind of well doing is not specified, because the application is general; and the principles on which it rests are applicable to benevolence of every species. Charity to the bodies of men is not forbidden: that is a part of practical religion: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" But there are in man wants more pressing than the wants of the body; miseries more to be deplored than any that can befall that part of our nature. For the miseries of time, time has a remedy; all will be ended at death. Lazarus carries not his sores into another world. But the wants of the soul

refer to eternity; and if they be not remedied in time, they are not remedied for ever. Hence, the text applies to all attempts which are made to benefit the immortal part of man. We may learn this from the allusions which are employed: "Cast thy bread," the seed of bread, probably rice, "on the waters," the earth moistened by the overflow of rivers; "and thou shalt find it after many days." This scarcely applies to bodily relief; you feed the hungry, and he is satisfied. But in our charities toward the soul, we have need of patience; and it is evident that spiritual benefit is chiefly here intended. I wish to direct your attention to some of the important objects which the text places before us.

I. A large and liberal benevolence is enjoined upon us. "Cast thy bread upon the waters;" and in another place we are told of the blessedness of these who "sow beside all waters."

Selfishness is at once the degradation, and part of the misery, of our nature. It shuts up some of the finest feelings of which we are capable. That which has separated man from God has also separated man from man. All our moralists have deplored this, and have endeavoured to remedy it. But the system of our religion is peculiar to itself; it accords with no other system in the remedy it employs. Moralists have attempted to destroy self by employing self, by making one passion destroy another. Our religion does not act thus: it does not employ Satan to cast out Satan; it does not proclaim the doctrine of merit; it does not make men benevolent by making them proud, but by planting in them humility and gratitude. These it makes the basis of benevolence.

Men, in general, forget that they are pensioners on the Divine bounty; but our religion proclaims to all in heaven and earth, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" and tells us, that, as we have freely received, we ought freely to give. Man surrounds himself by petty enclosures. There is the enclosure of sect: "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." There is the enclosure of nations: a chain of mountains, or the intervention of the sea, shall separate from our regard all nations but our own. There is also the distinction of colour and of form. But the Gospel of Christ sweeps down all these distinctions: it makes us see and feel that every man, every poor wretch, is our relation, a member of the same family, a subject of the same agony and of the same sin. "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon all the face of the earth."

The doctrine of stewardship is peculiar to our religion. This is a fine principle which the Gospel has brought to light: it teaches us, that though God is the fountain of all good, he has made creatures the instruments of good to man. All creatures look to God, all eyes wait on him. What appeals are made from widows! from distressed orphans! And what cries, perhaps, from many a poor heathen, "feeling after God, if haply he may find him," and saying, "Where is God, my Maker?" How many applications and addresses to God arise from all parts of his wide creation! And is God forgetful, is he unmindful, of them? He is not; but his mode of relieving is not for himself to bestow the good required: he has called his servants; he has bestowed on them his goods, and has made them his stewards. Here is another ground of gratitude which we ought to feel, and we ought to

know how to employ our Master's goods aright; for "after a long time" our Lord will come and call upon us to render a strict account of our stewardship.

But it lays the foundation of benevolence in gratitude. The first collection that was ever made for the poor was made in a Gospel Church; it was made throughout Macedonia, for the benefit of those who dwelt in Judea; and when Paul considers this act of gathering in one nation for the relief of persons dwelling in another, he cries out, in the fulness of his heart, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" But the great motive which produced this new act in the world was this: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." No other religion has such a motive to offer; and no other heart can feel it, which has not come under the operation of Christianity. This moved that great missionary, the apostle of the Gentiles; "the love of Christ constrained" him. And when we perceive His love in the ruin from which it has saved us; when we reflect on all it has purchased; and when we connect it with our souls, and God, and eternity; then we come under the influence of all the motives we can wish to feel, in order to produce true benevolence, and to constrain us to act for our fellow creatures, till all the wants of all the men on earth are met. And this same principle shall keep men in a happy, unbroken society in the kingdom of God for ever.

It is thus that Christianity calls up benevolence in man. And if there be in any humility in the first place, and gratitude in the second; if, having received mercy, you are also desirous to show mercy; then "cast your bread upon the waters."

And mark the rule of progression: "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight." The rule, you perceive, is not narrow. We are not to say, "Give a portion to seven;" and then on mature deliberation, following the bent of nature, to add, "but rather to six." No; "give a portion to seven, and also to eight." Let the work go on; let me do all I can to relieve the destitute, and soothe the afflicted, and spread the knowledge of the love of Christ through all the nations of the earth. This is the principle which, if acted upon, would soon change the whole world.

II. Some interesting motives to the exercise of benevolence are here set before us.

1. Here is a motive addressed to our hope.

We naturally desire success in any enterprise on which we have fixed our hearts. And we are to be commended for this. The more interest we feel in the souls of men, the stronger are our views of their spiritual danger, the more eager must be our endeavours for their salvation. But yet we have no reason for despair, even when our success does not appear. Though our bread is not seen, hope still clings to the declaration, that it shall be found after many days. How often have we seen this illustrated in the course of our labours! As to children, who have been the objects of our immediate care, in some cases we see the seed spring up; in others there is no appearance whatever of vegetation. But it is of great importance to remember that the seed and the labour are not lost. The fruit will appear ere long. And, O the blessedness of God in his Providence! And, O the blessedness of affliction and sorrow, which have turned the attention to early in-

structions and feelings, and have made them to become at last the means of bringing the individuals into the way of peace and salvation!

How often do we see this illustrated in general life! A man has been anxious that his conversation might be "good to the use of edifying, ministering grace unto the hearers." He has been anxious to avoid and correct all that is erroneous in society; and no good seems to result from all his endeavours; yet often do we see, even upon earth, how the image of a pure and bright example has been registered in the remembrance; it has been as the seed under the clod,—not dead, but latent. We see this occasionally now; and how many instances eternity may record, we cannot tell. Go, then, and cast abroad your seeds,—your good words, your holy example. Be always diligent; trim thy light; "cast thy bread upon the waters," and, in many instances, "thou shalt find it after many days."

But how many interesting comments do Christian missions cast on this promise! Bread cast upon the waters,—cast with trembling hands, cast under seemingly unpropitious circumstances,—is often found "after many days." I said, that missions afford a proof of this; but where shall we go? To what spot shall we turn? Need we go to foreign missions? You see it in yourselves. Ye men of holiness and zeal, who first visited our shores, what difficulties did you meet with! The Druids, and their awful mystic rites, their stony altars, their victims, their sacrificing knives, all shot upon your eyes, and you felt the difficulties of the enterprise in which you had embarked! Need we refer to other missions? What appalling spectacles presented themselves to the view of the missionary who first trod our shores! He listened to the din of noisy festivals; he beheld obscene and lascivious rites; he saw the effect of the whole system of worship on the wretched people by whom he was surrounded; but he cast in the seed; and has it not been found "after many days?" You, brethren, with your religious assemblies, your faith in God, your love to our Lord Jesus Christ, your hope in heaven,—you, brethren, are proofs that seed cast upon the waters may be found "after many days." Those who are now in realms of glory, wearing the crown of their rejoicing "after many days," regarding you as the trophies of their success for ever;—these are proofs that the encouraging declaration before us is true. O, then, go on: future ages shall call you blessed; and the glorious results of your labour shall be found in that day, when "they shall come from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God." There is,

2. A motive addressed to our prudence and foresight: "Thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."

The prudent anticipation of evil upon the earth is a powerful motive to liberal exertion. This may apply, first, to ourselves. Who can tell how near evil may be to us, how near may be sickness, how near the final call of death? Well, then, "cast your bread upon the waters." If your tongues must be so soon employed in groaning and in complaints, let them now, at least, be employed for God. If your feet must soon be laid upon the bed of sickness, let them now be employed in visiting the distressed, in carrying out the word of God, in collecting subscriptions for the support of his cause. And if death be so near, if you are hastening to "the house appointed for all living," what

is the moral? "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work nor device in the grave, whither thou goest." Or there may be a change as to your circumstances. A time may be at hand, when your means of doing and enjoying good may not be so great as at present. Ah! see how different are the maxims of worldly policy! "I know not how soon I may be deprived of my present means; therefore I must act prudently." Yes, prudently; but take care that yours is religious, and not carnal prudence; lest there be nothing left you but unavailing sorrow. This motive, I trust, will operate very differently upon you. You know not what evil may come; therefore do all the good you can now; and then, when the shadows fall upon you, they will fall more lightly, with the recollection that, though you have been unprofitable servants, and have done only your duty, yet, while you had the opportunity, you did all you were enabled to do by his providence and grace.

But let us view the subject on a larger scale. The prospect of evil has always been a motive for exertion to good men. They have endeavoured to meet the coming evil by laying up a store. Let us illustrate this. The apostles, in the midst of their great and successful exertions, prophesied a fatal apostasy: they anticipated this terrible evil. It might be supposed that this would have operated to check their exertions. But they acted on the principle of the text; they "cast their bread upon the waters;" they "gave a portion to seven, and also to eight;" they spread the seed freely and largely; and, amidst a great apostasy, seed sprang up, of which we are now some of the pleasing fruit. What lovers of the Scriptures were the primitive Christians! Before the invention of printing, with what zeal, and at what an expense, did they multiply copies of the sacred writings! There was "evil" coming on the world. A plot would be formed to hide the Scriptures from mankind, and even to extirpate them. But the zeal of the ancient Christians had provided against this evil: the copies were too numerous to be put out of sight; and they remained in the Church, to comfort the men of that age, and to exalt the hopes of the future. What laborious and faithful men were the reformers! what powerful preachers, and what powerful writers! When they could not preach, they wrote down the truth of God in books. How many books of piety, and of important, awakening truth, have sick chambers and solitary prisons produced! Holy and zealous men have made use of their pens for the benefit of mankind. There was "evil" coming upon the world. It was a lamentable truth, that apostasy would take place; that Christianity would be converted into a mere form, and become a dead letter. It is a fact, that, at one time, almost all the religion of this country was contained in these writings. But the time of visitation came upon us, and then those seeds sprang up. It is in this way the interests of religion have been preserved on the continent. There these books are acknowledged; which will, we doubt not, be ere long appealed to, and be the means of raising up a glorious Church. What laborious men were there in this country in the last century! "Many ran to and fro," and the knowledge of God in the heart of man was increased. There was "evil" coming on the world. The system of infidelity—a dark and gloomy system—arose; it spread itself with rapidity over the continent, and mere nominal Christianity

was unable to oppose any effectual barrier against it. But in this country it was otherwise. It was not likely that men would believe religion to be a "cunningly-devised fable," who had "the witness in themselves;" who had its hopes and its consolations, its joys and its glories in themselves. They were not likely to be persuaded that all was a dream, who had their Bibles, and who had seen their Christian friends in the hour of death, and heard them crying out, in the language which Christianity only inspires, "O death! where is thy sting?" The dart was thrown here as well as in other places; and it was aimed with as firm a hand; but it was met on the shield of Christian faith, and parried by the sincere Christian. He had felt the truth of the system; and it was not for him to doubt that which his eyes had seen and his heart had felt.

Here we cannot but applaud the exertions of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in attempting to spread over the face of the whole earth the important principles of truth; getting them translated into the languages of those countries where infidelity reigned, and spreading them on the widest scale. There was "evil" coming upon the world; a universal plot to check the progress of truth, and destroy civil and religious liberty, and injure the immortal souls of men. This was the evil coming on the world; which, however, that large distribution of the word of God met and provided for. The dark plot has been frustrated; men have been roused to wish for spiritual and religious liberty; and we are now placed in circumstances in which we could not have been placed, had it not been for these exertions.

See then, brethren, the force of this motive in reference to your exertions to send the Gospel throughout the world. You rejoice at a portion of success; but you know not what "evil" is coming on the world; you know not how the infant Churches may be tried, "as by fire," in a variety of ways. We know that earth is still earth; that Christianity, in all nations, must be put to peculiar trials; and therefore we are called upon to "cast our bread upon the waters;" to "give a portion to seven, and also to eight;" because we "know what evil may be upon the earth." We should lift up the standard in all nations, that, by whatever venom or evil men may be wounded, they may look up to this and find certain relief, as the dying tribes of Israel were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent. We have,

3. A motive drawn from the fitness of the thing. "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth."

The sun spreads its influence over the ocean, in consequence of which the waters evaporate; thus the clouds become charged with moisture; and they are filled by this wonderful operation of nature, that they should empty themselves upon the earth, and contribute to its fertility. Now, what are these clouds but enriched men, enriched Churches, enriched nations?—men blessed with talents?—Churches abounding in religious blessings, and charged with the benefits of the Gospel?—and enriched nations, like our own, charged with various blessings, and the ability to do extensive good, and spreading its influence to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south? If these are our circumstances, then there is a moral fitness in our benevolence. If God has given blessings to us, it is that out of our riches we may give to our fellow men. What would the clouds be without this?

However beautiful and varied the form which the winds might give to them, and however magnificent the light which might play upon their edges, what would they be but blots on our day, if they were ever absorbing, and never giving any thing back? And what are we, with all our knowledge, and with all our talents, if we do not aim to diffuse them abroad? If the clouds be full of rain, let them empty themselves upon the earth. Like the clouds in the spring of the year, which require no great effort to make them pour forth their waters, but tremble at the lightest breeze, and impart their living springs to the earth; so let Christian men be to the thirsty soils of this parched world.—There is,

4. A motive drawn from the consideration of human mortality. "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be."

We may apply this to the mortality of others. O how zealous ought we to be to preach the Gospel to those around us! The time will soon come when this will be of no avail: "As the tree falls, so it lies;" he that is holy will be holy still; and he that is filthy will be filthy still. Doubtless, we may suppose a very considerable feeling of sympathy in the mind of Abraham, when one who was called his son addressed him in distress; but what availed all his feelings, when "a great gulf" was fixed between him and the individual who sought his aid? And how soon may all our sympathy for our fellow creatures be in vain! If those who are now within our reach, if those who are now in darkness be not benefited by an application of the means God has given us in his providence, "a great gulf" will soon be fixed, over which no pity, no exertion can step. How important it is to do the work of the day in the day! to "cast our bread upon the waters!" to "give a portion to seven, and also to eight!" to sow our seed "in the morning and in the evening!" We are dying, and the world is dying around us!

III. Several objections are implied in the text.

1. The first seems to be, that the opportunity is not favourable to such exertions. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

The wise man represents a husbandman intending to sow his seed; but going forth, and after making a curious scrutiny into the weather, waiting for some atmospheric appearances, suited to his notions of propriety, till the seed time had passed away, and all his exertions would be vain. Now, what is this to teach us? to be regardless of all outward appearances? Certainly not; but that in the works in which we engage for the salvation of men, we are to proceed on a principle of faith. So every husbandman proceeds. He has a valuable commodity in his hands; his seed is good; and why should he part with it if he had not faith?—faith in the original promise, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not cease?"—faith in the providence of God, who "giveth food to all flesh?"—faith in the goodness of God, who is kind and bounteous to all his creatures?—faith in the general order of nature, which God never interrupts but for some special purpose? He goes on in faith. And this is the principle required in us: I know of nothing we can engage in aright without this; but nothing needs it so much, I am sure, as the work of missions. If

a person goes on to say,—nay, we will go with him, and confess,—"The clouds may often be dark; there may frequently be circumstances of great discouragement;" we reply, Circumstances are not more discouraging in your apprehension, than we ourselves are willing to acknowledge. But turn where we may, we see these indications. If we turn to the Jews, the veil is still on their hearts, as impervious as when, in days of old, it prevented them from beholding the glory of Him who was "full of grace and truth;" and from perceiving "form and comeliness" in Him who was "altogether lovely." If we turn to the Mohammedans, we shall find that no impression has, as yet, been made on the public mind of that people; and that no alteration has taken place in their circumstances encouraging to Christian exertion. If we go among savages, if they have more simplicity, they have also more ferocity. Who is to fly with the wild Arab to the desert, to teach him Christianity? Who is to bury himself with the Esquimaux, beneath the snows of winter, to benefit his mind? Who shall bring the aborigines of New South Wales to any thing like decency and Christianity? And if we turn to more civilized lands, their knowledge of sciences and arts only seems to lead them more fatally astray. Their systems are full of darkness; and their governments, excited to jealousy, are determined to put down all attempts to produce a change. And if we look at the subject of climate, how appalling! How many missionaries die! Some die before they have reached maturity; and others return home useless. Heat forbids our approach to one climate, and ice to another, and pestilence to a third; and death stands ready to shake his envenomed dart at those who go forth. And if we have found some regions better, and some men more docile, our hopes have soon been disappointed. There have been modifications of evil and opposition; but every where we have found "the carnal mind enmity against God;" every where "men love darkness rather than light." All this we grant you; we will go and stand with you, and mark these portentous clouds. What then? Are we to withhold the seed, or to sow it? We are to sow it,—to sow it in faith;—faith in the commission of Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;"—faith in the promise of the Saviour, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world;"—faith in the irreversible covenant, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," and all these dark, ferocious savages, all these unwholesome, inhospitable climes, yea, "and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

2. A second objection seems to be, that, even if we apply ourselves to works of this kind, very frequently the manner in which God carries on his work is very different from the conceptions which we had formed. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all."

As we granted the former objection, so we grant this. You speak of difficulty, and we grant it; you speak of mystery, and we grant it. As we are involved in great perplexity in our examinations of the works of nature; so there are mysteries in the workings of grace, which prove both to be His operation "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

This may be illustrated in the case of individuals. We generally form some idea of the manner in which their salvation will be brought about; and how frequently are we disappointed! We expect docility, and we meet resistance; we look for respect, and we meet contempt; and hence we conclude that no good is done. But how little do we know of the ways of God, of the ways of his grace! The very enmity which the man shows is only an outward proof that we have kindled up war in his soul; and the man under our eye, and the man under the eye of God, are two very different persons. Sometimes we suppose that a man in agony will cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" while God is softening his heart by a gentle process. Again we make use of gentle means; and God, by his Spirit, awakens him, and causes him to rush, by a mighty effort, into salvation. In some, there seem to be many hopeful signs; so that we suppose them to be "not far from the kingdom of God;" and yet we behold "harlots and publicans" entering before those who we had thought were on the very threshold. We meet with desperate characters, to whom we are almost afraid to preach the Gospel; we are afraid to tell the malefactor that he may be saved; afraid to go to men at the eleventh hour, and tell them that there is a full and free salvation for them; and yet we mark how God does in a moment reveal himself to such, before a whole nation of Pharisees expressing their opinion by their sneers; and how he comes to men, even at the eleventh hour, plucking them, as brands, from a burning destruction.

And we have sketches of plans in our own minds, as to nations also. A nation is to be roused, to be brought under moral and religious influence. We think much is to be done by laws; by the application of splendid example; by means of men in the higher ranks of society; and we have no hope of good till these agencies appear. But while men are speculating on these plans, God is forming a people for himself from among the lower classes, as he did in this land; proceeding from the less to the greater; awakening attention, producing inquiry, effecting salvation, causing it, by these means, to reach to a greater extent, and to spread through all gradations of society, till it influences men of rank, and finally reaches the cabinet. Then, on the other hand, we are ready to exclude all greatness, and all law, and to say, "God works not by an arm of flesh; he uses not human means." At the same time God works; and he uses all these distinctions, and rank, and influence, and genius, and makes them all subservient to the promotion of his great cause. God acts not by any man's plans, but leaves it to us to say, "Thou knowest not the works of God."

Apply this to missions. How often are our previous conceptions perfectly sported with, in the way in which He carries on the work! We see, in this country, how religion is connected with arts and sciences; and we think that it must be so abroad; while, in truth, our missionaries see Christianity, not following in the train of these things, but bringing them in her rear. We look to countries in which we have authority and government, and we dwell on the advantages of having laws for our protection. We say, that for missionaries to go into distant lands, where men are wild and lawless, is only to expose themselves needlessly to danger. When, lo, how often do barbarians show our messengers "no small kindness," while God is "a shield to them

and the lifter up of their heads!" Then we go to other schemes: we say, "We are too full of our own plans; we are placing too much dependence on governments and establishments;" when, mark how, under the shelter of these regulations, and the sanction of these governments, we are enabled in safety to sow the seed, and we are blessed with success, which, but for this shelter, we could not have had. Again: we see the superstitions of heathen lands blended with false science, with false theology, with false astronomy, with false chronology; and we cannot see what can be done without expert logicians, acute theologians, profound scholars, excellent linguists; these must be the men. But mark! while we are waiting for such men, God is raising up linguists on the spot; and while we are considering and scheming, the word of God gets translated into the language of the land; and words spoken from the hearts of men who know but little of worldly science are spoken to the heart; and Christian Churches, under the influence of these heart-spoken words, arise to call the Saviour blessed. Then if we conclude, on the other hand, that human science and talents are not blessed of God; we find in the eastern world, that the light of our science is streaming forth throughout the nations, and gradually destroying, in the minds of men, those superstitions which are founded on erroneous views of the constitution of the universe. Still farther: there are many false systems which are upheld by power. Popery frowns; the Tartar publishes his edicts of death; and other arbitrary enactments induce us to lay aside the use of means, while we look out for great political changes to be effected. We anticipate that the kingdom of Christ is to be set up amidst subverted thrones; and our eyes glow, and our hearts seem almost to dance, at the sight of the glittering spear and the sound of the trumpet of war. And yet we have had experience enough of this in our own day. The sword was abroad around us for years, and we know of no spiritual fruit that was produced. O the folly of this politico-theology! We find that, during the few years of peace we have enjoyed, good men have been raised up on various parts of the continent, the Bible has been circulated, and abundant means have been employed and blessed since the termination of the desolation. But then, again, if we were to say, "All these are judgments, and no designs of mercy are connected with them," we should err again. He, it is true, who hopes that war will make men better, will be disappointed. But the wheel of Providence is full of eyes; and these things may be overruled to prepare the way for a more liberal distribution of the word of God. Just as in the clefts of a rock, or in a piece of architecture broken by age, a seed shall be dropped; and as the moisture trickles down to it, it swells, and vegetates, and breaks down the surrounding masonry, and thus converts the crumbling materials into matter for its own vegetation.

3. A third objection is, that there will be a partial failure. "Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that."

Part of the seed will perish. We admit this; we hide it not; it is a fact that part of the seed will perish, and that the condemnation of men is increased by the hearing of the Gospel. Some have objected to this, We shall increase the condemnation of men, by preaching the Gospel to them. But this same objection would have kept Christ in heaven. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had

sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." It would exclude all light from men. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "We are a savour of death unto death, as well as a savour of life unto life." But what is your duty? Why, as to yourselves, it is to "give the more earnest heed to the things that you have heard, lest at any time you should let them slip;" and, as to others, to do all you can to give effect to the administration of the Gospel, by renewed exertions, and by more fervent prayers. I wonder which of our missionary societies, as to the degree of their success, could bear the test of the parable of the sower. If we follow that representation strictly, we may suppose that three parts of the seed which is sown perishes. But, though this were true, still the sower, according to the command of the Lord, is to go forth and sow. But then, brethren, let us look at the consolatory reflection that follows: "We know not the works of God;" we know not "which shall prosper;" but we know not, also, "whether they both shall be alike good." We know not but all to whom we preach may be saved; but all to whom we administer advice may be benefited. And we all believe that a time is coming when the preaching of Christ, and all the seed sown, shall alike be blessed and fruitful, and "the word of the Lord have free course and be glorified." Until the arrival of that period, "until the Spirit be poured from on high," "blessed are they that sow beside all waters."

IV. We have some reasons for diligence and constancy.

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

1. The first reason is taken from the quality of the seed.

The seed you sow is good. The seed here referred to is that of bread, in which man's vitality, nourishment, and strength, all seem to be bound up. So in the word of God there is all that can bless and dignify man here, and prepare him for everlasting glory. For in him who receives this seed there springs up that knowledge which reveals to him his nature, his condition, his destiny, and his duty; that humble penitence which leads the soul to bow before its God; that faith which lays hold on Christ as a sufficient Saviour; that love which leads to all goodness and holiness; that affection to all the members of the same family which prompts him to seek their welfare; that power which, having girded on the spiritual armour, makes him more than conqueror over sin and death.

From this spring, also, all those principles which, operating on society at large, maintain a warfare with all that is evil, and will continue to do so till all evil is destroyed; that sense of justice which shall break every bond of oppression, and release every slave; which shall take away all cause of war, and bind the hearts of men together by one tie of affection; those principles of mercy which leave no want unrelieved, but render every man a friend and a brother; those principles of order which respect masters, magistrates, and all in authority, and which effectually secure to them all that is their due; those principles which connect all in one great family, and give vitality and strength to all that is benevolent and kind; those principles, in fine, which, by planting Divine love in man, produce effects the most great,

benign, and glorious, to the whole human race. This forms a powerful motive, therefore, to diligence and constancy in sowing the good seed. O, what results are these! An angel might envy the task of bringing them about, but God has reserved the honour for favoured man.

2. Consider the small portion of the world which, after all, has been sown with this blessed seed.

I undervalue not what has been done: God forbid I should! If we look at home, we have reason to rejoice in the vast good that has been done. If we look abroad, though we only see a verdant patch here and there in the wilderness, how ought we to rejoice! And yet, who cannot but lament that the seed has been sown in so few places? O, when shall Europe be cleared of the noxious weeds which have hitherto choked so much of the good seed which has been sown! When we look at Asia, and see the smoke of the bottomless pit darkening the minds of so many myriads; when we see the abominations of Hindostan, so refined, so cruel, and so full of lust; we may well wish for the time when all this shall be displaced by the doctrine of one Lord and one Mediator. When we see that some nations of the world have bowed their necks to the yoke of Christ, we cannot but wish that all may feel the same harmonizing influence, and take upon them the yoke of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart." And though this delightful period may seem at a great distance, yet let us not doubt. There is no mention of any doubt in the text; it speaks of success, and of success only. We are sowing the good seed; and it is given to us plentifully, abundantly; we have sufficient to sow the whole world. And though we have, comparatively, few labourers, we have every encouragement to "pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send more labourers into the harvest." All the wheat which is in this country sprang from a few seeds, which were brought here by the hands of a thoughtful individual; and now, year after year, we are blessed with abundant harvests.

3. Remember that you all, without exception, have it in your power still more largely to promote this good work.

This I am fully prepared to prove. How has it been promoted? By prayer. And may we not pray more fervently than we have ever yet done? And does not God regard "the prayer of his elect, which cry day and night unto him?" How has the work been promoted? By conversation. One has thus kindled the fire in the breast of another. Let us do so yet more. It is said, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." Let us do this, and so fan the zeal and charity which now glow in our hearts, that we may be excited to new ardour, and that the cause may never die. I conceive that this cause has been promoted very greatly by our anniversary missionary meetings. And let us aim that a more pious feeling may mark this anniversary; that we may be more dead to self, and to all that might at all mar or impede our efforts. Let us guard against dissipation; let us seek to make these services serious and sacred; let us be much in prayer. Let us maintain a spirit of intercession with God; a feeling of lively gratitude for our innumerable privileges; a love to all who bear the Saviour's name; and an ardent

zeal for all that is connected with the Redeemer's honour. And as to liberality, we all know how much has been done by this. It is not for me to say how much this may be enlarged. O the blessedness of that individual on whom Christ looked, and of whom he said, "She hath done what she could!" Let each individual ask, "Lord, is it I?"—"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

SERMON XVIII.—*Christian Citizenship.*

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Philippians iii, 20, 21.

CHRISTIANITY, as taught by the apostles, presented a standard of moral attainment, both in personal experience and conduct. Observe this: a pure and perfect system is realized. They did not deal in the false commerce of truths unfelt. They could say, as the apostle does say in this chapter, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an ensample." So that his own experience of religious truth was not solitary. Many of those with whom he was surrounded, many members of the Churches he had raised, many of his coadjutors, walked like himself. They all walked together in the way of Jesus Christ.

But there were teachers in the primitive Churches, and members in those Churches too, who did not walk thus. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." They were enemies in their principles, even as they were Judaizing men, who enforced the Mosaic economy, in opposition to the atonement of Christ, declared in the Gospel. Describing their character, the apostle says, "Whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; who mind earthly things."

The reason he gives why the Philippians should fix their attention on his example, and the example of true Christians, is afforded by the text. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."—In these words we find specified,

First. The character of true Christians, in opposition to false professors.

Secondly. A view of those glorious hopes which they entertain.—Under the moral and sanctifying influence of those hopes, the Christians of the apostolic times could say, "We have our conversation in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body."

The subject is too large for discussion for one service; I shall, therefore, this morning fix your attention on the first topic just mentioned, and leave the latter for the evening.

This morning, then, we shall consider the heavenly "conversation" of true Christians. The word "conversation," as used in Scripture, is taken in a more extensive sense than in common language. We now generally limit it to discourse; but at the time when our translation of the Scriptures was made, it was used to express the whole of a person's conduct and deportment. "Having your conversation," your conduct, "honest among the Gentiles." "Let your conversation," your whole deportment, "be as becometh the Gospel of Christ." In this extensive sense the word is used in the text.

A strict rendering of the words will present us with other ideas connected with this subject. The words are, literally, "We conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven;" in opposition to those persons who mind earthly things. "Our conversation is in heaven;" we conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven; "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

We proceed, then, to consider,

I. The heavenly citizenship of Christians.

1. What is the city to which they belong?

The apostle tells us it is heaven. We shall enter into the meaning of this allusion, by considering that the Jews were persons who felt it their peculiar national honour, as to every individual, that the metropolis of their country was the holy city, the city of God, the place of the temple, the residence of God, and where the holy service was performed. The same feelings prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, to whom the apostle ministered. The Grecians had their respective cities; the city of Rome was famed throughout the world; and every citizen used to boast of the extent of the population, and the power, of the city to which he belonged. Entering into these ideas, and sanctifying them, the apostle represents true Christians as composing a commonwealth He gives them a Sovereign, in the person of Jesus Christ their Lord. He gives them a city, and represents them as citizens of it. It is not an earthly city of which he speaks; for there is Jerusalem above, which is the mother of all true Christians. This is the metropolis of the great empire of the universe, where God himself dwells in manifestations of glory and light, inaccessible to flesh and blood; where his creatures, the seraphim that surround his throne, and angels, as ministering spirits, stand to do his pleasure; where the spirits of good men are gathered; and to which all true Christians on earth are continually ascending. "Here we have no continuing city; but we seek a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." This is the city of which the apostle here speaks; a city ornamented by the overflowing goodness of God, and fitted for the eternal residence of those who love him and are beloved of him.

2. When are true Christians made citizens of this heavenly state?

Formerly they were "children of wrath, even as others." Once they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope, and being without God in the world." They had no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. The great act by which they are invested with the citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem is that of pardon.

When, by the preaching of the Gospel, a man is made sensible of h' alienated condition; that he is of the world, and at enmity with God, that he is in the condition of a rebel against the majesty of heaven; when, under a sense of danger, he humbles himself before the Most High, whom he has offended, and embraces the word of reconciliation, which sounds forth from the mercy seat, when he accepts the atoning sacrifice by which reconciliation is effected; in that moment God forgives his sins, and justifies him freely by his grace, and the man is made a citizen of heaven; his name is inscribed in the book of life; there is written upon him the name of the city of our God, and he bears the inscription of the name of God himself. Such is the value of pardon; such is the astonishing change which the forgiveness of our iniquities produces in our relations. We are no longer of the world; we are brought out of the body of men against whom the wrath of God is revealed, and who cannot inherit the kingdom of God; and we are associated with all those whose names are enrolled in the heavenly city. We are considered its citizens, and shall be finally gathered there to enjoy its blessedness for ever.

It may be inquired,

3. What are the privileges connected with this state of relation to the heavenly city? What are the advantages arising from being citizens of heaven?

These are many and important. The first is freedom. That had an importance when the apostle wrote; the allusion had an importance which it has not now. It is now of very inferior consequence to be free of any city, however distinguished, where the body of the people are free; but in Rome the great body of the people were in a state of absolute slavery, as much so as the negroes in most of the West Indian colonies. Those only were free who were freemen of cities; others were at the absolute will of masters who were frequently cruel. They were liable to every kind of insult, abuse, and injury. In this view the apostle's word "alien," with respect to Christians, has great force. When Jesus Christ, speaking of the Jews, says, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed," they were offended at the observation, thinking he considered them slaves in a civil sense, and they said, "We be Abraham's children, and were never in bondage to any man." Our Lord informed them that there was a moral slavery: "Whosoever committeth sin, is the slave of sin." Sin has usurped a tyrannical power which has destroyed all that free agency which man originally possessed. Every man who is not liberated by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ is under the government and power of the god of this world, a slave to divers lusts and pleasures, bound in the chains of Satan. How many are sensible of it! How often do men resolve to break off their sins, but they find no power! How frequently do they plan schemes of reformation, but they want ability to carry them into practice! If any are utterly insensible of this, and fancy themselves free, it is only a proof of the dreadful effect of sin, at once to enslave and infatuate; and this in consequence of rejecting the liberty of the sons of God. Thus they remain slaves, while they fancy themselves free. It is the high privilege of heaven-born sons that this bondage is broken, and they are emancipated. They have come under the mild and gracious government of the Lord Jesus Christ, and prove that his

service is perfect freedom. We have no proof of our citizenship, unless we have been enabled, by Divine power, to break off our sins. "Be not deceived; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." If a man's experience go no higher than this, "When I would do good evil is present with me," he is still a slave of sin.

4. A fourth privilege of citizenship is, that it admits every person to honourable employment and office.

There is not a single citizen of the New Jerusalem whose employment is not honourable. I grant, there is a diversity of offices. When Jesus Christ ascended on high, "he gave some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ." But every Christian is an official character, and bears the honourable relation of priest in God's temple. This city is a holy city; it is a temple itself, and all the temple that God has in the world. When St. John had a vision of the heavenly city, he saw no temple there; for the fact is, the city itself was the temple. So is the city on earth. God is not worshipped in a temple made with hands; his temple is composed of living stones; and every person who is a citizen of the heavenly city is a priest in this holy temple. To him it belongs to offer the gifts and sacrifices of God, to approach him with daily thanksgiving, and to offer prayers for himself and others. He is an intercessor for all mankind; and takes his incense, and puts it into the censer of Jesus Christ; that censer which contains the prayers of all the saints, and which he is continually offering before the throne of God.

5. Another privilege is fellowship and communion with the whole body of Israel.

"These things I write unto you, that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The apostle informs us, one great object of the death of Christ was to gather all into one, both things in heaven and things on earth; men and angels into one society, one community, one relation of communion and fellowship. "For this cause I bow my knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." How inspiring a thought is this! The communion of saints is a blessing of incalculable benefit, for this reason,—that no Christian is joined merely with his own party, but is a member of the universal Church of Christ upon earth.

"Scatter'd o'er all the earth they lie."

God sees them every where. Every true Christian receives the benefit of the prayers of the millions of Christians who reside on earth; and that is not merely an idea. There are many blessings we receive, not in answer to our own prayers merely, but those of others. Many signal interpositions of mercy in our favour are benefits to be referred to the ministry of all the heavenly citizens, who, as the priests of God, interest themselves in special prayer for all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

This fellowship connects us with angels. There is a special interest that angels, however invisible, have in the Church of Christ. In the early ages of Christianity this was indicated by their taking a visible part in the affairs of the Church on earth. Jesus Christ has given

us an interesting view of the concern felt by the higher part of the family of God, where he says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The Apostle Paul has said, "They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation:" and hence, in writing to the Hebrews, he says, "Ye are come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

There is another Being with whom the Church has communion. Every heavenly citizen has communion with God. "We have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" and this union is represented to us by an interesting figure. Christ is the Head, and we are the members. So intimate is the connection, that altogether they form but one body. He himself has a delightful metaphor, too: "I am the Vine; ye are the branches. Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit." This communion has the heavenly citizen with his Lord. He is joined to Christ, who is the Head of the Church, and the Judge of all.

6. Another privilege is, he has a right to the common property. Therefore the apostle tells us of "the inheritance of the saints in light." This privilege is not nominal, but real. Every person admitted into this state of citizenship becomes proprietor of the inheritance which God himself has prepared for the saints in light. What is that inheritance? It comprehends many external advantages. God's providence, while they remain in this world, is the inheritance of the saints; and a satisfying inheritance it is. It always gives what is good, and withholds what is evil. These words stand true, (connecting earthly things with heavenly,) that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Whatever appears good, and is withheld, it is not good for us, all things considered. It is not good, taking in our whole nature and interest, our souls and our bodies, time and eternity; "for no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." All our external happiness, and even our felicity in a future state, are comprehended in this inheritance; but this is not its greatest part. The emphasis is in this: it does not lie in either of these, but where the apostle has placed it. If citizens, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. We are joint heirs with the humanity of Jesus Christ. Even as the humanity is joined to the Godhead, in some such way must the spirits of all the saints be united to God in heaven. God himself is their inheritance. His presence is their vital influence. The communications to them shall be rich and uninterrupted. They shall be sharers of his bliss and purity; surrounded with the everlasting arms of his power; and all the perfections of his nature shall be engaged to make them blessed.

We proceed to consider,

II. The conduct manifested by true Christians, and corresponding with their privilege: "Our conversation is in heaven;" we conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven.

This must be the conversation of the whole community. It cannot be otherwise. We speak of the genius of a people. All collective bodies acquire a genius, a common character. The Greeks were remarkable for refinement. The Romans were remarkable for an ex-

pression of lofty ambition. There must needs be a common character in the citizens of heaven. If we are to specify one common character, that which absorbs and takes in every other peculiarity, what shall we fix upon but holiness? Hence the term "saints," and "sanctified." Hence the exhortation, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Hence they are denominated righteous persons. The nations of them who are saved walk in the heavenly city, and inhabit it. They are clothed in white, as an emblem of purity; and have palms in their hands as an emblem of victory. Observe, then, unless our genius, our whole character, be holy, we do not carry about with us the mark; the name of our God, and of the city of our God. It will be impossible for us, in the nature of things,—if we are acquainted with the institutions of this city, if we live under its influence, if we live under its laws, if we associate with its citizens, if we are connected with the Lord and Governor,—it is impossible there should be in our minds any thing but continual hatred to what is evil, and a choice of what is good, and an endeavour to conform our inward tempers and outward conduct to its principles. It follows, that if you are living under the influence of unsanctified passions, if you do not bear the stamp of holiness, your claim of citizenship is unfounded; and you rather belong to those persons who live not according to the Gospel, but walk so as to excite the weeping apostle to say, "Ye are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction." Let us remember, then, our character; and ever recollect, that, as citizens of heaven, we should bear this character, even in a polluted world. There is no reason why we should yield to the influence of temptation, because the world is polluted. The disciples of Jesus Christ are intended to be the light of this dark world, and the salt of this corrupted earth. "Fear not," says he; "I have overcome the world; and greater is he that is in you than all that is in the world." So it is possible, if there be any meaning in the declarations of Jesus Christ, it is possible for us to conquer that enemy which he conquered, and weakened in his power, in order that his followers may contend on more equal terms, and in the spirit of faith obtain the victory.

We converse as citizens of heaven. We not only maintain this character of holiness generally, but we boast of the institutions of this heavenly city. The apostle seems to have this in view when he refers to those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ has ever been the great touchstone of the characters and feelings of the persons to whom he alludes. In order to avoid the stigma of the cross, they gave up the great doctrine of the atonement. The apostle, therefore, says of himself, "God forbid that I should glory,"—though once I was ashamed of this,—"save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Whenever there is a spirit of shame, there is treachery, and whenever there is treachery, Jesus disowns us as citizens of his inheritance. We ought to glory in all the institutions of Christianity. In doing this we may meet with difficulties in some instances. We may have a cross to bear; but he who refuses to bear his cross, would in the circumstances of Judas, have betrayed Christ; and, in the circumstances of Peter he would have denied him. Ever remember that

God has left in every Church, and in every individual Christian, the deposit of his pure truth; and that truth is thus deposited to be made known to the world, and transmitted from age to age, and from one generation to another.

If we converse as citizens of heaven, we shall be, as the apostles were, bold and courageous. "And when they saw,"—the rulers among the Jews,—"the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus;" that they had been brought up at the feet of that Master who never knew how to fear man. They took knowledge of them, that they had been brought up at the feet of that Master who had said, "Fear not them that kill the body." The false shame of many in the apostle's days made him weep; but he rejoiced that God had not given him the spirit of fear. From what did that courage arise? From a truth we ought never to forget,—that every true Christian is under the protection of his Lord. Every citizen is under the protection of the magistrate of his city. Wherever a Roman went, his shield was the magistrate of Rome. Wherever an Englishman goes, he feels himself under the protection of his country; he knows that he is a citizen of Great Britain; her laws protect him every where. Some such idea seems to have prevailed in the apostle's mind. Wherever there are citizens of heaven, we know they are under the protection of God, the chief Magistrate and universal King; and as his power is efficient in every place, we know that power would avenge them. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." There never was the blood of a martyr shed upon earth, the curse of which was not recorded. The souls of them who are slain cry out from under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood?" This principle inspired the apostles, and ought to inspire us, with boldness in all the calamities and dangers of life. We should ever recollect that the eye of the sovereign Lord is upon us. He who has all power perfectly surrounds his people, as the hills surround Jerusalem.

If we are citizens of heaven, it will be seen in our spirit. It will be holy, and we shall feel for the common cause. This is the peculiarity of the kingdom of which we are the subjects. There is a perpetual hostility to every other power on earth. Light cannot compromise its kingdom with darkness, nor Christ with Belial. As we are priests in his temple, soldiers in his service, we ought with all zeal and enterprise to endeavour to spread the truth of Christ, and call men from the service of Satan unto God. It ought to give us the highest joy at seeing that heavenly city continually crowded with new inhabitants. We should pray and exhort whenever Providence presents an opportunity, remembering that we live not to ourselves.

He who converses as a citizen of heaven has his affections there. We find, therefore, that the apostle opposed the people who in the preceding verse are represented as minding earthly things. How natural is it, when at a distance from our native land, to turn our thoughts to it! How natural for persons of the same city, meeting in a distant part of the earth, at once to recognize each other, and enter with spirit and feeling into conversation concerning their common country! Can a person separated from home remain long without having his mind directed to it? Will he not be ready, on all occasions, to converse about it? What shall we say of citizens of heaven who never think

of it? to whom the very thought of it is extremely dull? who in the midst of their business and pursuits on earth feel themselves quite at home? Can we say of persons of this kind, that they converse as citizens of heaven? Is it not a proof that there is nothing spiritual in their hearts, nothing heavenly there? If we would act correspondently with this high character, and those great privileges, we should acquire a habit of heavenly meditation; and our minds should be fixed on those things which belong to our peace. If our affections are dull when objects of this kind are presented to our minds, we may take this as a proof of the deficiency of our experience. In order that these high and heavenly prospects may engage our minds, in order that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, we should be constantly pressing forward, till we enter that city of God where all is joy and peace.

Thus every true Christian is a citizen of heaven; and by acting in this manner he has his conversation there.

The latter part of our subject is to engage our attention in the evening.

Let us close the whole by observing, that this heavenly state of mind can only be preserved by looking for the Saviour, the Lord from heaven.

These two characters should not be separated in our minds whenever we think of the coming of Christ. He is our Saviour and our Lord. He saves us at present from all sin; and at his second appearing will save us from death, and all the power of the grave. In his almighty power and love let us trust, that he may save us to the uttermost, according to the promises of his word. We should come to him for a complete salvation. "According to thy faith, so shall it be done unto thee."

And let no man forget that Jesus is his Lord, his Master, and his Judge. "And if judgment first begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" "His fan is in his hand; and he will throughly purge his floor; and will gather the wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable."

You profess to be citizens of heaven; yet yours is only profession, if you habitually mind earthly things. Beware of this. Christ has a double character of Saviour and Lord. None but those who have lived in his service, and have conversed as citizens of heaven, can be accepted of him at last. Go and look on him under these characters. Let them impress you with solemnity on the one hand, and with joy on the other. Amen

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Sermon XIX.—*The Resurrection of the human Body.*

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Philippians iii, 20, 21.

With one stroke of the pencil of inspiration the apostle has, in this chapter, drawn an eternal mark of distinction between true Christians and the men of this world. Of the latter he affirms, "They mind

earthly things;" that earthly things engage their affections and their efforts; that nothing spiritual, nothing eternal can draw their attention from the vanities and cares of earth. In vain time rolls on; in vain the solemnities of a judgment are in preparation; in vain they are informed that there is another world, ready to burst upon their view; they still are prone to the earth, and mind earthly things. This is the infallible characteristic of the unconverted spirit. "They that are of the flesh mind the things of the flesh." If earthly things be the principal object of our attention, the principal object of our life, of our pursuit, of our anxiety, we need no other intimation to which of those two classes we belong. Whether our lives be moral, or immoral, whether we are professors of religion or not, whether or not we are held in esteem by those about us, we are among those who glory in their shame, and are of an earthly mind. This is a mind at enmity with God, and inconsistent with the spirit and character of the Gospel.

With the same brevity, and, at the same time, with equal force, the apostle has marked the character of true Christians. "Our conversation is in heaven;" or, we converse as citizens of heaven; or, as others render it, our conversation is for heaven. All our thoughts and purposes, all our words and works, have a reference to that future and heavenly state, which is the object of our hope. A new principle is introduced into the mind; new objects of pursuit are set before us; things spiritual and eternal affect our wills, and raise the affections of our souls. We have a new end for which we live. We live in reference to that state of felicity which Jesus Christ has promised in his Gospel; and for which the work of our life is to prepare. How truly, indeed, ought objects of this kind to occupy our regards! Is it not true that we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we not believe that he who left his disciples will come again the second time? "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" and his second coming is that event which puts an end to time, and opens to us the boundless prospects of eternity. And can we fail to have our conversation in heaven? to have a reference to it in our general temper, and the tenor of our lives, if in truth also we believe, that he shall change or re-fashion these vile bodies of ours, and make them like unto his glorious body, in order to put us in possession of an eternal weight of glory, of which he himself is in possession? Let such truths as these dwell frequently in our meditations. Let us realize them by faith; and they will excite both our hopes and fears. They will take hold of the weakness and strength of our nature; they will raise us from spiritual sloth, and urge us on in the way of God's commandments.

The second thing proposed this morning to be at present considered, was, the glorious hope which has such a great influence upon our conduct as Christians. This is that part of our text to which your attention is now directed. The transformation of the human body, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, is the subject of the present discourse. It is connected with other subjects, in which we have a deep and eternal interest. It constitutes one of the peculiarities of the Gospel, and, at the same time, is one of its glories. It is peculiar to the Gospel to teach, that the human body shall rise; and that, with respect to good men, that body shall be transformed, and made like unto the body of

the Son of God himself: "Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more." We should not have known, that, when the heavens are no more, we should rise again, but for the revelation of the Bible. It is true, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, were both parts of primitive theology; but one was soon lost, and the other greatly corrupted. Paganism cherished, amidst its corruptions, a firm belief that the mind was immortal. It recognized in man an undying principle; and assigned that principle to a place of happiness or misery, or employed it in a variety of transmigrations. But in every system of paganism, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was omitted. This was something too hard, too difficult to conceive; and therefore, when St. Paul preached at Athens "Jesus and the resurrection" of the dead, "some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." In every other system except Christianity, one half of man must perish, and perish for ever. People attended their dead relations to the grave, and sorrowed as men without hope. To the pains of separation were added the sorrows of despair; but life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. Death may continue its ravages; one generation after another may be embosomed in the grave; but the hour will arrive when Jesus Christ, whom we look for, shall again come from heaven; when he shall appear and operate as the Resurrection and the Life; when this promise shall be fulfilled, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead," Isaiah xxvi, 19. For "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," from heaven, "who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body." As though the apostle intended to heighten this subject by contrast, he calls our attention to the present condition of the human body. It is a "vile" one; the body of our humiliation, or, our humbled body: "Who shall change this humbled body." With great truth this appellation may be used.

I. In the first place, we must be reminded of our sinful condition.

What brought death into the world, but sin? Our first father sinned, and the germ of bodily immortality perished with him. His children are born in his own likeness. It is so determined, that death passed upon all, for that all have sinned. Every pain we feel, every death we witness, ought to remind us of this humbling consideration, that we are sinners. These circumstances did not arise out of the original intention of God concerning us, but were introduced into the world by the sin of man.

2. Our body may well be called a body of humiliation, for another reason: the body, as well as the spirit, is the seat of sin.

The appetites, and passions, and tempers, connected with the evil principle, form the body of sin, under the dominion of which men in general labour; and, with the apostle, they may call it, "the body of this death." For this reason, men who live under the influence of evil principles and passions are said to be in the flesh. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Even after conversion, and when a moral change is wrought in the powers of the mind, there is a war between the flesh and the spirit. "The body is dead, because of sin." It is the seat of many temptations, and of much evil. St. Paul him-

self found it necessary to say, "I keep my body under, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be a castaway."

3. It is the body of our humiliation, when we consider the immense labour that is necessary to provide for its wants.

Its present state is a deeply-humbled one in this respect, that so little a portion of our time can be spared for the cultivation of the intellectual powers, or for intercourse with God, and in obtaining a preparation for another world. Those employments which are most delightful, and those exercises which are so necessary, are carried into the accidental spaces that our leisure will allow. Is it not an humbling consideration, that so much time, so much effort, so much care, so much physical and moral power is required, in order to supply the wants of our earthly frame; when, at the same time, the mind of man is capable, not only of ranging at will through the whole material creation, and of tracing at every step the displays of the Creator's power and wisdom and goodness, but of holding sensible communion with God in acts of religious worship, and of even doing his will upon the earth as the angels do in heaven? Man, intelligent and immortal, made for thought and for God, is doomed, in providing food and raiment for his inferior nature, to employ the greater part of his time in severe and wasting labour. O sad effect of sin!

4. It is a body of humiliation, if we consider it as a clog to our devotion.

It is a hinderance to those richest feelings, of which the human heart is capable,—feelings of devotion. We cannot, at best, rise very high in this present state; and devotion cannot be continued for any long period of time. See an instance of this in the case of the disciples. If ever they were introduced into a scene where they would be impressed with the evil of sin, it was at that period when they went to the garden with their Lord; when he went to drink the cup which the justice of God put into his hand; yet, at that time, so great a hinderance was the body, that the disciples fell asleep, while their Master was offering up prayers, with strong crying and tears. He said to them, "What, could not ye watch one hour?" but immediately, with that kindness and compassion so habitual to him, he said, "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak."

5. This body of our humiliation must be still farther humbled by death.

All our light shall be quenched in darkness; all our animation shall be chilled; all our beauty shall wither. "Give me," says Abraham to the sons of Heth, "a place where I may bury my dead out of my sight." The dead here referred to was once his beloved Sarah. The bereaved husband cannot bear the sight of even her remains, when once the spirit is fled; so deep is the state of humiliation to which they are reduced.

These observations may serve to illustrate the sentiment in the text, —that the body in the present state is an humbled body.

II. The apostle calls us to the contemplation of that glorious scene which is peculiar to Christianity. He proceeds to set before us the resurrection and transformation of this humbled body. This vile and humbled body shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.

Of course this implies the doctrine of the resurrection; that doctrine

at which the wise men of Athens scoffed, and said, "We will hear thee again of this matter;" that doctrine, the stumbling block of all the heathen, who called it the hope of a worm. They knew not that God, in his mercy, had given to a worm this glorious hope through Jesus Christ.

1. We have here the fact of the resurrection.

On this subject, and before I introduce the Scriptural proofs of it, it may be necessary to observe, that the Scriptures teach us that the same body shall rise again. "Who shall change *this* humbled body;" *this* body, not another. It is impossible for us to say in what the indentity of the human body consists. However ridiculous the supposition, we are taught by philosophers that the body changes its substance as it passes through different periods of life. Of this, however, there is no proof. It is not the same body, say some, but a similar body, that shall be raised again. But unless the same body were to be raised, the term resurrection would be an absurdity. The term signifies, to rise again. That which has been laid down must be taken up. For God to give us a new body, one which the spirit never inhabited, would not be a resurrection but a creation. The same body, from which the spirit has been separated by death, must be re-entered by that spirit; and in order to that the body must rise again. The subject is encompassed with difficulties, but no difficulties should be placed against the express revelation of the word of God.

The doctrine of the resurrection is set forth by a variety of Scriptural evidence.

(1.) The first proof of it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself.

For, observe how the sacred writers conceive of that fact, as one connected with a train of most important consequences; and especially as connected with the resurrection of the whole human race. Hence we are told that Jesus Christ is "the first fruits of them that slept;" in allusion to the Jewish rite of taking the first sheaf that was reaped at the commencement of the harvest, and presenting it before the Lord in his sanctuary, in acknowledgment that he is the God of the harvest. It was presented also as the first fruits of the general harvest just about to be reaped. So when Jesus Christ rose, he ascended into heaven, and appeared in a human body in the courts above. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."—The resurrection of the bodies of men is founded on the same evidence as the resurrection of the body of Jesus. Go and search the tomb of Christ, and see in his vacated sepulchre an infallible pledge that your graves shall give you up, and that you, if believers in him, shall be gathered in the general harvest.

(2.) We have another proof in the extent of redemption.

Redemption is the payment of a price, in order to liberate a captive This idea attaches to the sacrifice of Christ. The redemption is two fold,—virtual and actual. Virtual redemption is redemption by price. Actual redemption is redemption in fact; a claiming of the captive.—With respect to the human spirit, the redemption is actual as well as virtual. In this world we are redeemed from the power of sin, Satan, and the hands of justice. The redemption of the body is not actual, but only virtual; but a time will come when it will actually be delivered, when the captives of the grave shall be claimed. Redemption extends

to the body, as well as to the soul. This is evident from what the apostle says: "Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body, and with your spirit, which are God's." "We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." Christ cannot lose his own. The bodies of the saints, as well as their souls, have been purchased by him. Their members, though dissolved by death, are still written in his book; their dust lies numbered in his hand; and the time will come when it shall be raised again.

(3.) There is another proof of this doctrine, and it is also a Scriptural proof: for I bring no argument from reason; the resurrection of the body being exclusively a doctrine of revelation. The proof I mean is the necessary punishment of the wicked. They shall rise again to receive their full punishment. Both the body and the soul have sinned, and both body and soul must be punished. "Fear not him that can kill the body; but fear him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

(4.) Another proof is the application of the term "sleep" to death in the New Testament.

The delightful ideas suggested by that term were never before introduced into the human mind in regard to the dead. It well became the apostle to adopt, under the full impression of the resurrection, a word which is expressive of that relation to a blessed immortality which every believer bears. Removal from this world is no longer death to the Christian; and the Scriptures call it "sleep." So Stephen "fell asleep." "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." This is a delightful view of the death of the saints. Death to them seems to be the means of collecting new vigour for the morning of the resurrection. As the spirit during sleep goes into delightful scenes, till recalled by the dawn of the morning, so the separate spirits of the saints go into the joys of the paradise of God, till their mortal dust is quickened by the resurrection.

(5.) It is established, likewise, by the great designation of Jesus Christ.

"He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Without the resurrection these words could not be accomplished: "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." It is true, that death reigned from Adam to Moses. Rachels had to weep for their children; but there is a limit to these scenes of wo. The time specified by Job must come: "Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens are no more." The time will come when the heavens shall be no more; when the voice of God shall be heard, and the dead shall arise. From that moment there shall be no more death. That is a delightful sound to all who have the hope mentioned in the text; but it is calculated to excite most dreadful alarms in those who are not living for eternity. If there is a heaven of heavens, so there is a hell of hells. There will be no shelter from the beatings of infinite justice; neither annihilation of the spirit, nor any other sanctuary.

After the resurrection, or along with the resurrection, there shall be a transformation of the bodies of the saints. The promise of the text is peculiar to the saints: "Who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body." Observe the model: it is the body of Jesus Christ; not as born of Mary; not as he appeared among the Jews, when the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us; not as it appeared between the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven, but after his ascension. That suddenly took place, probably when the disciples were gazing after him, and the clouds were receiving him out of their sight. We are not without some representations of the glory of the body of Christ. To the mount of transfiguration, to Mount Tabor, Jesus took some of his disciples. His countenance became shining as the sun, and his raiment became white as snow, from the beamings of his body through his garments. The disciples, in an ecstasy of feeling, cried out, "Master, it is good to be here."

St. Paul himself had a view of it, in the career of his persecution. He was arrested by Jesus on his way to Damascus. The sun was shining in the cloudless brilliancy of an Asiatic sky; but there was seen a light beyond the brightness of the mid-day sun. He fell at the feet of his Lord, and said, "What wilt thou have me to do?"

We have another representation in the vision of Jesus Christ, shown to John in Patmos: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard a voice saying, I am Alpha and Omega: and I turned to see the voice that spake with me; and I saw one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot. His eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: and I fell at his feet as dead."

Yet these were but faint representations of the glorified humanity of Jesus, who is to be the great Pattern and Exemplar to which the transformation of the saints is to be conformed.

What does it imply?

That there shall be no more death; for Jesus Christ, having died once, dies no more. The immortality of the body, as well as the soul, is secured by this declaration: "Because I live, ye shall live also."—The cup of trembling shall no more be put into the hand. After you have died you never can have the conflict again; for, though death be an enemy, yet, let it be remembered, it is the last, for "there shall be no more death."

I infer from the conformity of the bodies of the saints to the body of Jesus Christ, that there can be no deformity.

Deformity in the countenance is sometimes the effect of sin, sometimes of accident. Whatever bad expression is in the countenance, it is the result of the indulgence of evil passions. They acquire such strength as to write themselves in the countenances of men. Every deformity must give place, inasmuch as the great model is the glorious body of Jesus Christ. The bodies of the saints shall all be perfect; while the countenance will yield to the impressions of the hallowed spirit, beaming with love; at peace with itself, and with every thing around it; and at peace with God.

This conformity of the body to Jesus Christ supposes that the excessive care, necessary for the support of the body, shall then exist no more. The necessity for occupying so much of our time in providing

for the body will no longer exist. The appetites, the passions, and the wants of these bodies of ours, must cease. We are then to be like the angels of God. Though an eternity is given us for our existence, ye not a moment shall be abstracted from its infinity to bestow upon the body.

It also follows, that, if the bodies of the saints are to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, they shall be assistants, and no longer hinderances, to the operations of the deathless spirit. It shall never again be said that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The noble inhabitant shall not have a tent to dwell in, but a house from heaven. Such a change will pass on the body, as to render it no obstruction to the rapid operations of the spirit. We shall move without weariness; we shall think without exhaustion, and without check or restraint.

All this is illustrated to us by St. Paul himself, in a chapter you have often read: 1 Cor. xv: "Some men will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?" I think a part of this chapter is often misunderstood. It is generally supposed, by those who have not thought particularly on the subject, to be designed to prove the doctrine of the resurrection. It has been thought that the apostle enters into proofs of the doctrine of the resurrection drawn from vegetation; that he is giving proofs of it from analogies supplied by natural things. He does no such thing. He never could do it. He was too wise a man to attempt it. He knew it rested on the testimony of Jesus, and not on any thing in nature. To deduce from reason the doctrine of the resurrection, is left to half-infidel divines. All he does here is to illustrate the fact expressed in the text. His object is to show the difference between the resurrection body, and the body in its present state. The whole of what follows is an answer to the question, How, in what way, in what form, are the dead raised up, and with what kind of body shall they come? In the first place he tells us that the present body is like seed cast into the earth, and rotting in corruption; but the resurrection body shall be like the same seed when it has sprung up, and appears a perfect plant, waving in the wind, and invested with foliage and beauty. As great a difference as there is between the plant and the seed, so great a difference shall there be between the glorified body, and the body in its present humbled condition. He tells us, likewise, "All flesh is not the same flesh." His intention here is, to teach us that God, of the same matter, makes some bodies different from others. There are some terrestrial, and some celestial. In some matter the body is so formed as to appear sparkling, as will be the resurrection body. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon;" and as great a difference as there is between the glory of a twinkling star, and the full-orbed sun, so great a difference is there between the body that now is, and the body that shall be. The matter which forms our present humbled body shall be made glorious; as much superior in beauty as the plant is to the seed; as much superior in glory as the sun is to a star. He therefore goes on, "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." I know some persons have made use of this expression as an argument against the resurrection of the same body; but in great ignorance. What the apostle meant to say, was, not that the same body

should not inherit the kingdom of God, but that the same body, formed of flesh and blood, could not inherit it. Flesh and blood, our present gross body, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; the same matter must be re-fashioned. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption;" so quick, so active, so imperishable, that in some sense it may be called a body of spirit. Thus he will "change our vile body."

III. The means by which all this is effected is here specified: "According to the working by which he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

Doubtless the apostle introduced this to answer all objections. There are many philosophical objections to the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. We might amuse you by mentioning these objections, and the answers usually given; but I shall not do it, because I do not sanction the principle of philosophizing on a pure subject of revelation. Is it not enough that we are conducted in a straight line to the great end to which we are to come? The power of God answers all objections. This removes all difficulties. The great question is, whether the doctrine be a doctrine of revelation; if so, its truth follows of course. To say that the resurrection implies a contradiction, is to say God has formed a world to frustrate his own purposes. Certainly matter, in all its forms, is so arranged by God, who sees the end from the beginning, that when he gives the word to raise the human body, there cannot possibly be any obstacle; for it is done by that God who is able to do all things. We refer all to the power of God; the whole is a miracle. If it is true that this book is true, then can the resurrection of the dead imply no contradiction. That would be to charge the Author of nature with folly. Who dare say that the power of God cannot effect it? I have no hesitation in saying that the power of God does things as great every day. The only difference between these daily occurrences and a miracle, is, that the miracle does not occur every day. It is as great a miracle that men breathe, or that the sun rises, as that the dead body shall be raised. It is as great a miracle that men exist now, as that they shall exist again. In order to remove skepticism, he has filled all nature with continual emblems of this doctrine. God has given a great number of illustrations in the arrangements of nature and providence. What is night but the death of day? What is morning but its resurrection from the shades of darkness? What is winter but the death of the year? In the dead leaves you see emblems of death scattered wherever you go. What is spring but a resurrection? Look at that unsightly seed, without any appearance of life, thrown into the earth; and then the particles separating, there springs up a plant! Behold it unfolding, and budding, and blossoming, and casting its fragrance all around: that is its resurrection. We see the insect tribe give their evidence; living frequently and absolutely in different states and elements; sometimes crawling, as a worm; then lying in apparent torpor; then bursting the shell, and with wings of beauty and activity skimming the atmosphere. Go, then, let philosophy go, and ask how the body, crumbled into a million of atoms, some sublimed by fire, some transmitted into plants and animals, can arise? Let skepticism ask, doubtingly, "Can the jaws of death relent? Can the grave give up her dead? Can the grave be our dressing room?" Let these questions be asked, and they are all answered by the decla-

ration of the text, "Through the working of that power, by which he is able to subdue even all things unto himself."

We ought to be reminded that there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. But there will be no glorious body for the sinner. The saints will first have a resurrection; the others will steal from their graves. The wicked will be all dragged from their graves,—dragged by the messengers of wrath to the throne of judgment; while every fearful feeling, all the malignity of spirit, unchanged by Divine grace, all that strong and painful horror that will arise from reflecting upon their condition, will be expressed in every lineament of their countenances. Well may we say, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." Let us not be found with that rejected throng. When we open our eyes on the morning of the resurrection, may we behold a smiling Judge!

It becomes us to aspire to as much of the glory of the future state as can be attained. We approach the nearest in this world to the perfection of heaven when we most completely gain a victory over the body. "I keep my body under subjection," said the apostle, "lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." It is a body of humiliation: let us give it as little a portion of our time as we can; let us learn to live for other purposes. Much time and attention it must occupy; but how much time and attention are often paid to earthly things, that might be paid to things that are heavenly! O let us stir up our minds; and let us pray to have the victory over every irregular appetite; and let the higher part of our nature have the predominance!

What encouragement this subject affords us on the loss of our friends! Let others sorrow as those without hope; but when you are called to attend to their graves the remains of friends you love, recollect the great doctrine of Christianity is, "We shall meet again." Well might the apostle say, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The subject ought to fortify our minds against the fear of death. The great object of the religion of Christ was, to "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." You cannot fear it, if you can say with the apostle, "I know whom I have trusted; and he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Not only our spirits are secure, but our bodies likewise. A passage shall be opened to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. We may say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison with thee." Mark the ground: "For when my heart and flesh fail, thou wilt be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." What is death to a man with such hopes? He shall not cease to live. Death is merely the interruption of life; merely its parenthesis;—the narrative still runs on. The way to heaven is opened; it is sanctified by Jesus. Who that realizes views of this kind can be reluctant to leave the world? There is not a Christian, as soon as God makes him ready, that is reluctant to leave the world? There is not a Christian who, as soon as God makes him ready to leave this world, can regret to leave it. He only wishes to live here for the sake of others, or for promoting his own moral improvement. He longs to be dissolved, and

to be with Christ, which is far better. He says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? When my flesh and my heart fail, God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." God grant you all this grace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Sermon XX.—*The Destroying Angel Arrested.*

Preached at the opening of a Chapel.

"And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing floor of thee, to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The Lord thy God accept thee. And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel," 2 Sam. xxiv, 20–25.

David had been conducted, by a series of striking providences, to the throne of Israel. The house of Saul had fallen before him; the rebellion of Absalom had been put down; the nation, settled in peace under his government, became powerful and wealthy, great in arms and fertile in resources; all appearances were favourable to a long continuance of prosperity to the nation, and satisfaction to the monarch.

If we knew how to enjoy our blessings in the fear of God, they would be continued unto us; but it is the sin of man, that he extracts, even from the mercies of God, the poison which destroys his comforts: he grows fat upon the bounty of Heaven, spurns its laws, and awakens its vengeance.

This was the case with the Israelites at the period to which our text refers. The particular crimes of which they were guilty are not specified; but the anger of God was kindled against them; and he is never angry without a cause; and he never punishes until mercy has attempted the reformation and repentance of the criminal in vain.

It is probable their sin was a general forgetfulness of God, and a vain confidence in the strength, numbers, and valour of the nation; for with this feeling of national vanity David was affected. This led him to listen to a temptation to number the people; and this was the immediate cause of the punishment which followed. We are not to suppose that the people were punished for David's sin in numbering them: he was punished in their punishment. He saw the numbers in which he boasted thinned by the destroying angel; the subjects he loved falling victims to a plague he had no power to avert; his own pride humbled by his nothingness in the hand of God. But they were punished for

their own sin; the immediate cause was an act of David: Satan, as it is explicitly declared in the book of Chronicles, had tempted him to number the people; but that act could not have been followed by a general punishment, had not they been guilty, had not God been angry with them.

The time was come when punishment could be no longer delayed; and the pestilence received its commission. Seventy thousand men died from Dan to Beersheba; and that the judgment might be known to proceed from God, an angel was made visible, with a drawn sword, directing, by his terrible agency, the vengeance and the death. He approaches Jerusalem; the thronged population of the metropolis is menaced; when, at the command of the Prophet Gad, David proceeds to erect an altar in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. There the angel stood; and where the danger was, there the remedy was applied. The text presents us with the conversation between the generous Jebusite and David in this emergency; the one proposing to give the threshing floor, and that freely, on so pressing and religious an occasion, and the other refusing to offer what cost him nothing. At length the altar was erected, and the plague was stayed; the blood of atonement disarmed the anger of God, and he looked again with favour upon his people.

This history is not inapplicable to our present meeting. The prevalence of sin, and the approach of punishment, the death of some, of many, and the danger of the rest, called for an altar and sacrifices; the altar was built, sacrifices were offered, and the plague was stayed. We, too, have erected an altar. Because iniquity abounds, because thousands have perished for lack of knowledge, and thousands more are in the same perishing condition, we have set up a house for God. On this altar, it is true, no sacrifices will be offered; but the one true Sacrifice will be exhibited. The fountain of life and salvation will be opened, and we trust that, by the mercy of God, and your prayers, the plague may be stayed.

These ideas we shall collect again in the progress of our discourse; but we shall first take a somewhat comprehensive range of observation.

The history indicates to us,

I. The strict regard paid by the Almighty to the conduct of his creatures.

This is a consideration which ought ever to impress our minds.—The want of it is one of the causes of the misconduct of men. All are not openly infidels; they do not deny a God; nor do they allow his existence, and deny his omniscience. All do not confine him to his own heaven, and make it part of his greatness and grandeur to avert his eyes from earth. All do not make him indifferent to sin, and say, with the unbelief of those of old, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." But though we may not say this, we may be influenced by the very principle from which it proceeds. All who sin forget God; act as though there were no God, or he had no omniscience, or that he is indifferent to their conduct.

To awaken us to a consciousness of the regard he pays to our actions, to his ever-bending, ever-watchful eye, it is, that he has so often specially interposed to punish sin, and in a manner which could leave no doubt of his agency. For this, among other purposes, the histories

in the Old Testament have been preserved; that, observing the displays of his power and justice, we might "sanctify the Lord in our hearts," and that the whole earth might "tremble and keep silence before him."

On this subject, the history before us is instructive, not only in the general principle, but in many important particulars. Does any one suppose, that because he is but an individual, one amidst the myriads of the human race, he shall pass in the crowd, and escape the notice of his Judge? Let him learn that David was an individual, yet his individual sin was noticed, dragged to light, reproved, and punished.—Is it again supposed,—for error loves contraries,—that, however God may govern individuals, nations are ruled on other principles? We learn that God was angry against Israel. His whole dealings with that people show that he has the same rule for communities as for the persons who compose them; and we are therefore instructed that we have a common concern in the morality and in the religion of our land; and that we are called to counteract vice, and seek the conversion of men by all the means which God has instituted,—by supporting the ministry by the erection of places of worship, by our example, our reproofs, and our prayers.

Is it ever whispered in our ears, that only gross and open sins provoke the anger of God? The subject before us will discountenance that destructive error. Both Israel and David were punished for sins of the heart. We have no reason to conclude that the people were grossly wicked. No idolatry, no open vice, is charged upon them.—The crimes of the prince and of the people appear to have been the same,—pride, self confidence, and forgetfulness of God. Let us, then, watch our hearts; and let us know that nothing but the conversion of our whole nature can take us out of the reach of danger. If, again, as we are prone to speak peace where there is no peace, and flatter ourselves that because of the religious privileges we enjoy, and even the existence of a considerable share of religion among us, we shall meet with exemptions from punishment; in this particular also the subject will guard us from false conclusions. Who was David but God's chosen prince? Who were Israel but God's chosen people? Had they not the fathers, the glory, and the covenants? Was not the tabernacle of God at that time in Gibeon? that pledge of his presence and protection? Yet against this people God awoke his vengeance. Who, then, are we? We have the Gospel, the name, and even the power of Christ. We have holy Churches and faithful ministers; we have zeal, and we have charity; we have missionary societies and Bible societies; but I sometimes fear lest even these blessings, these privileges, these pious acts, should be the source of a vain confidence: we think ourselves, probably, much better than we are. If we have the Gospel, how many make light of it!—if holy Churches, unholy ones!—if faithful ministers, unfaithful ones! If in benevolent societies there is a happy combination of the wise and good, let us remember that hand joins in hand among the wicked on a more extensive scale than among the good.—You crowd our houses of worship on the Lord's day; but how many do you leave behind! You rejoice in the accents of prayer and praise: but do you remember the song of the drunkard, the laugh of the trifler, the filthy conversation of the obscene, and the blasphemy of the impious?

For, ah! very far are we from being a righteous people! God is angry with us. The plague of sin is gone forth, and the plague of punishment must follow. Myriads of evil thoughts and purposes, of evil words and actions, rise up every moment to plead against us at the bar of justice. And let no man say, "We have Abraham to our father." Our religious privileges only prove our greater guilt. The souls of men are perishing; dangers of the greatest magnitude surround our fellow men; and because God is a just and jealous observer of men, we are called to fear for ourselves, and to be impressed with the necessity of exerting ourselves to rescue others.

II. We are instructed by the history to consider sin as an evil followed by the most disastrous consequences.

The pride, and forgetfulness of God, of which David and his people were guilty, might appear, if sins at all, sins of a very venial kind, the common infirmities of human nature; yet they were followed by the dreadful choice of evils mentioned in verse 13, and with the destruction of seventy thousand persons. One of the most fatal habits of mind is, to treat sin lightly, or with indifference. It is exhibited as a mark of eminent folly. "Fools make a mock at sin;" and it may be regarded as an infallible indication of a declining state of religion among the professors of Christianity, when the ideas of sin and misery are in any degree separated from each other, and sinners cease to excite commiseration, because their danger is no longer contemplated. All the great characters that adorn the sacred page, and who stood forth in their day to reform and reprove mankind, are represented as deeply impressed with the destructive evil of sin, and tenderly concerned to stop its ravages. Lot was vexed in spirit with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. Moses prayed that his own name might be blotted out of God's book rather than the people should perish. Horror took hold of David, and rivers of water ran down the eyes of Jeremiah, because men kept not the law. Jesus, in whom every species of excellence was pre-eminent, has given us a most affecting example of this tenderness: he wept over Jerusalem, and lamented that the people knew not the things belonging to their peace. The apostles caught his spirit; and, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," they "persuaded men."

This spirit has always preceded, and indeed given birth to great revivals of religion, and animated the instruments by which they were effected. What urged the Wesleys and their coadjutors to labours more abundant than those of their fellows, and impelled them to every corner of this land, holding up the word of life, the beacon of safety, but a serious conviction of the penal consequences of sin, and compassion for dying men? And what urges now the missionary to burning or freezing climes, to deserts and wildernesses, to sufferings and deaths, but the same principle? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, possessed of a faith which sees the awful realities of an unseen world, contemplating men by the light of eternity, and seeing, in every sin they commit, whatever lustre of interest, pleasure, or custom may be cast over it, the envenomed dart of everlasting death, they spring forward,

"With cares, entreaties, tears, to save,
And snatch them from the gaping grave."

In proportion as this sentiment decays,—and decay it will, if eternal things lose their hold on our minds,—the work of God declines; the means of counteracting the destructive progress of sin are neglected; the plague rages, but no one erects an altar to arrest its progress; the building of places of worship is neglected; men dwell in their own ceiled houses, but forget to lay the foundations, or carry up the walls of the temple of God. It is perhaps a great effort of zeal to keep up old institutions; but be sure the spirit is too weak to catch the tone of circumstances, and to devise new measures, to meet the exigencies of the Church, and the salvation of men. This want of zeal for God, and want of love for men, has been the ruin of all the Churches that have ever fallen; and we ought, therefore, with assiduity, to watch against it; for as it prevails the ground which the burning charity of good men has gained from the world and sin is lost. It was gained by the lofty deeds of Christian heroism, and it is lost by supine and yawning carelessness. The vanquished enemies of God and truth rally; and when the victors think them dispersed, and at a distance, they avail themselves of this folly, and seize even upon the camp!

To rouse us, therefore, to such exertions as our own profession and the dangers of our fellow men demand, we ought frequently and deeply to meditate on the destructive consequences of sin; and of these the subject presents an affecting picture. But is it necessary, in order to kindle in our hearts a proper degree of zeal, that we should see an angel with the sword of vengeance drawn over our towns and villages? must plagues and famines be sent, to awaken us to a just concern for the salvation of men? As creatures prone to walk by sight, and to be led by our senses and present interests, these occurrences would, doubtless, very deeply impress us. O yes! were we to see our dead lying in our fields; did we witness, in the solitude of our streets, the wide wastes of disease; were our friends, instead of dropping gradually, and in a manner which might prepare us for their loss, to be carried away as by a flood, what heart would not be rent, what eye remain unmoistened? If, then, it were revealed to us that to stop this plague, to arrest this stroke, altars must be built, houses erected to God, public worship better observed, sinners urged to reformation, how many would bring their offerings to build the altar! how many would say to the builders, as Araunah to David, "The Lord accept thee!" how many would cry to the wicked, and spare not, "Turn ye; why will ye die?" And, my brethren, why should we not do all this at present? Are pestilences and plagues the only consequences of sin? Is it by these only that God avenges his cause? Are these the only paths to ruin? Ah, no! whether the destroying angel bares his sword in sight or not, he is awfully active in his commission; though the pestilence should not walk in darkness, nor the arrow fly by noon day, the state of men, the state of your town, presents sad and serious cause for sympathy and exertions. How many hearts does sin this moment wring with anguish! how many consciences are up in arms against the peace of their possessors! how fatally does error spread her wiles for the understandings, and vice her snares and pitfalls for the passions of your neighbours! Look into the families which surround you; what disorder, and wretchedness, and vice, do they present! Look at your Sabbaths, and mark how they are profaned! your streets,

and behold the scenes of lewdness, and dissipation! at your seamen, and ask how many of them rush to a dangerous employment, where their lives are in constant jeopardy, defying God and blaspheming his holy name: and if these things do not move us, let us go a step farther, and, with feelings as serious as the cause demands, let us ask how many souls are daily borne away from this town in the ordinary course of mortality, into the presence of God, in whose death no hope can scripturally be entertained; and how many are following to the same dreadful result, on the verge, on the brink of the pit! What! can the destroying angel be more visible than this? Do you want more certain demonstration of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," of the danger which follows it? Certainly not. O, then, let us set up this altar to God, this day, in faith toward God, and compassion to dying men; and may the wickedness of the wicked, by the means here used, be brought to an end, and the plague be stayed!

III. The history also exhibits to us the only means of forgiveness and escape from punishment. The altar was built unto the Lord: "David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings; so the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed." In other words, sin was expiated by the intervention of a sacrifice.

This is the doctrine of every book of Scripture, of every age, and of every nation; and we wish particularly to fix your attention on this subject, both for your present edification, and because this doctrine, and those immediately consequent upon it, will be the doctrines which will be delivered from this pulpit, and which will enter more or less into all the services of this chapel.

Let us, then, observe that the testimony of the Church of God, from every age, is, that the anger of Him whom we have offended can only be propitiated, and that he only can be approached by sacrifice. When man became a sinner, then an altar marked the place in which he worshipped, and his offering was a bloody sacrifice. When Noah left the ark, his first act was to erect an altar, to reconcile God to a world which bore so many marks of his wrath; and at the smell of the sweet savour of the offerings, He gave the promise, "I will no more curse the ground for man's sake." When the first-born of Egypt fell beneath the stroke of the angel, it was the blood of the lamb sprinkled upon the door posts that guarded in safety the offspring of Israel. When the plague broke forth against the rebels in the wilderness, Aaron ran between the living and the dead with his censer and incense, and the plague was stayed; but it was incense inflamed by fire from the altar of sacrifice. Thus, on ordinary occasions by stated, and on extraordinary displays of the Divine anger by extraordinary sacrifices, did the Church show forth the intended death of the true Sacrifice. In all these ages, men guilty and fearful fled to the horns of the altar; and they hid themselves from wrath, under the shadow of their smoking sacrifices. At length, however, the Son of God was manifested, and Deity became incarnate, that, in a body thus prepared and consecrated, he might offer himself a sacrifice unto God, so acceptable, so rich in merit, so powerful in efficacy, as to bring the whole sacrificial system to an end, by an offering made once for all, and not to be repeated to all eternity. This was ever the intention of God. Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, both in the intention of

God, and in the faith of the patriarchs. For it was him they saw: though the promises respecting him were afar off, they were persuaded of them and embraced them. Faith stretched its arms through centuries of time, and held Him as the only ground of all their hope, as Simeon held him in his arms. Sense saw the animal victim; faith saw the Seed of the woman: sense beheld only the blood of a lamb; faith beheld blood Divine, the blood of God. And, accordingly, when Christ appeared, he became in reality all that the offerings of the law were in figure. They were ceremoniously clean; he was morally clean. To them the punishment of sin was transferred in figure; he really "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Their blood opened the way to the holy place; his opened it to heaven, and opened it for all mankind.

This is our method of salvation; "we are saved by his blood;" and it is important for us to know that, in this single doctrine of a substituted sacrifice, the whole method of our salvation is included. The manner in which sacrificial rites were performed illustrates even now the method of salvation. The offerer confessed the fact of his offence by bringing his victim; and he that believes in Christ, by assenting to this method of expiation, confesses the fact too: "I have sinned, and therefore I fly to Christ as my atonement."

The offerer was prompted by the fear of punishment to slay his victim and sprinkle the blood; so David in the text. If we are properly alarmed at our danger, we shall haste to the only refuge of a Saviour's bleeding side. He that put an animal to death for his sins acknowledged that he deserved in like manner to die; and it is with this sentiment that we ought to approach God, through Christ: we must feel that we deserve to suffer all he suffered in the garden and on Calvary, for ever. He that offered, however, expressed his faith in the efficiency of the divinely-appointed means, looking through the type to the thing signified; and it is by firm and full reliance on the merit of the sacrifice of Him who has already died, that we become personally interested in his passion and intercession, and are justified and accepted.

Lastly. The sacrifice was the instrument of sanctification; it supposed a covenant with God; the sacrifice was eaten; the parties were made friends; and sin, which only could make them enemies, was renounced for ever.

Thus, the appointment of sacrifices supposes the confession of sin; a salutary fear of the terrors of a holy God; a just apprehension of the desert of sin, death in its most painful forms; and a reliance and trust in God's appointed means of salvation, and the renunciation of all sin, and the recovery of his blessing and friendship. All these are taught you and enjoined upon you by the death of Christ; and on these terms we invite you to receive pardon and salvation. "We preach Christ crucified." You are sinners, here is the Saviour; you are debtors, here is your Surety; you are guilty, here is the Sacrifice. O, offer it up in faith, and be saved from wrath. This is the only way of salvation we can direct you to; and that you might be invited into it, this house was erected. Here you will hear these important truths, and we hope no other. Were it likely that any other foundation would be laid, we should sorrow and not rejoice in the consecration of this

place this day. No, we would without pain see it crumble into earth, and its dust carried away by the winds, if every stone and beam in it did not reverberate the joyful tidings. We do not fear. Christ will be known in these palaces for a refuge; and may salvation by faith in him be preached here while one stone is left upon another. O house of God, may no song of praise be ever sung in thee but salvation to God and the Lamb! May no prayer be offered in thee but the prayer of faith in his death and intercession! May the voice of no preachers be heard in thee except those who glory in the cross of Christ, and who determine to know nothing else among men! And may thousands, who shall successively tread thy floor, sanctified and saved by these truths of God, pass through thy courts to those realms of day where our songs shall be renewed, and the Lamb, as newly slain, receive the prostrate homage of thousands of thousands for ever and ever!

IV. We observe, that the erection of this altar, by David, was a public act, an act in which the public were interested; and in this respect it agreed with the practice of all ages. The building of an altar was ever a public act; the place was separate from common purposes; and it stood as a religious memorial for the instruction of mankind.

Tradition speaks of the altars of Adam and Enoch; but this we know on the authority of sacred history, that Abraham and Jacob built altars in their journeyings, imposed upon them names expressive of their religious application, and left them as witnesses to the truth of God to future ages. The same practice existed among the heathen, whose altars were public, often built on high places for better observation and notice, and had inscriptions or emblems of the deities to whom they were dedicated, and thus were considered as a kind of silent teachers of their religious opinions.

The same appropriation and publicity we notice under the law of Moses. Where the tabernacle rested, there an altar was built; and to this the whole congregation resorted. At the time David erected this altar, the tabernacle of the Lord and the altar of burnt offering were at Gibeon, but the occasion required another altar; and it was built where afterward the temple stood to proclaim the honours and the claims of Heaven, and near to the place where Christ was lifted up upon the cross, and made a public spectacle, that he might draw all men unto him.

This appropriation of places to religion, and the erection of altars and temples for public resort, speak it as the common and agreeing sentiment of all mankind, that such erections were important to the preservation of religion, and that the association of men, in acts of religious worship, exerted a powerful moral influence upon society.—This sentiment is confirmed by the Gospel. We have the Lord's day consecrated for religious services; on that day we are commanded to assemble; and the erection of places of worship must of course follow upon the obligation to this duty. In this the wisdom and goodness of God are equally manifested; and on this occasion, when another place has been built for religious purposes, it may not be improper briefly to notice some of those important moral consequences which follow the establishment of the public worship of God.

1. The erections themselves, and more especially the acts and

observances of worship, are memorials of religious facts and doctrines.

They keep a sense of God upon the minds of men; they turn the thoughts of the public, whether they will or not, to serious subjects.—The very sight of a religious erection, of a congregation assembling or dismissing, awakens religious ideas; while the word of God, read and preached, is the constant exhibition of the light of truth, amidst the darkness of the world. Religious knowledge is thus preserved, religious influence is exerted; bad principles are counteracted, the moral standard raised, and society is purified.

2. Our worship is public, and the places we erect are places of public resort.

This is an important consideration. In the earliest ages of the world, the worship of God seems to have been a kind of family worship, which was conducted by the head of the family, who was the priest. Had mere family religion only been observed by good men, the important end of public instruction could not have been well answered. Truth would have been comparatively hidden; the light would have been placed under a bushel; the city in the valley, not on the hill. Instead of Christians holding forth, as they are now commanded, the word of life to the wicked, the wicked would have had to seek out the word of life. This, few of them would have done; they would not have broken into the privacy of families, there to join in worship, and to solicit instruction; and the consequence would have been, that ignorance and error would have spread, to the total extinction of religion. We have no hesitation in saying, that we owe all our light, all our piety, all our glory, to the public worship of God among us: thus men are called and invited to join with the pious. No man in the house of God feels himself an intruder; the place is public; the service common. The doors of such a house as this, like the gates of mercy, are thrown open to all mankind, and whosoever will may come and join in our praises and prayers. Here the rich and the poor meet together on a level; here the servant and his master stand on equal terms before God; here even saints of every degree, and sinners of every cast, may crowd together, and find in the word of the common salvation, the instructions, the reproofs, and corrections, which their several states demand.

3. Beside this, our places of worship are to be considered as the places where the Gospel, the good and glad tidings of salvation, are announced to men.

They are the places of treaty and negotiation between God and man. Ministers are the ambassadors of God. Clothed with authority by him, they enter his house, and a rebellious world is summoned to hear from them God's gracious terms of pardon, and his authoritative demand of submission. Holding this book, the copy of the treaty which has already the signature of God, and only wants yours to give effect to all the mercy it contains, we pray your acceptance of it. Concerned, on the one part, for the honour of God, and feeling, on the other, for your dangerous condition, we pray you, as though God did beseech you by us, be ye reconciled to God. Do you want information as to the terms of the treaty? It is ours to explain them. Do you object? It is ours to show you the unreasonableness of your objections. Do you doubt of the extent of the mercy? It is ours to do honour to our God, and to

satisfy your doubts, by dwelling upon the proofs of his boundless and inexhaustible love. Do you trifle? We are engaged by our office to set before you the awful glories and terrors of the God you have offended. And do you delay? We urge you, by the worth of your immortal spirits, to put them to no farther hazard. In this way, by the institution of the ministry, and the ordinances of public worship, how many strangers, yea, enemies, to God have in every age been reconciled to him! Numbers, we have reason to believe, are, at the several solemnities, on every Sabbath, recovered to Jesus Christ; and the same glorious effect will take place here. This is another place of treaty and negotiation opened in the very camp of rebels by the authority of Heaven. O that it may prove successful! Here may the sinner, cased in the armour of rebellion, feel the mighty force of the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; and here let the right hand of his Saviour perform mighty acts; may his arrows be sharp in the hearts of his enemies; and let

"Them fall, by Jesu's cross subdued,
And feel his arrows dipt in blood."

4. Nor are these the only moral consequences resulting from the building of places of worship. They are houses of prayer, and remind us of our dependence upon God, and of his condescension to us. They are houses of shelter from the storms and cares of life; the places where we cast our care on him, and prove that he careth for us; the places where he is known, eminently known, for a refuge. It is by assembling before God that we confess his name before the world, and reprove a world which profanes his Sabbaths, and goes away from his ordinances. It is in them that the most intimate and the purest friendships are formed; for, mixed as a whole assembly may appear, it is in reality divided into little bands, attracted to each other by similarity of views and feelings; and the recollection, that they have walked to the house of God in company, never fails to quicken the kind affections, and to heighten their regard. Above all, it is here that we prepare and exercise ourselves for heaven; and one of the best and most interesting views we can take of the houses of God below is, that they are schools for heaven. Here, it is true, we see as through a glass darkly; but, in attempting to form clearer conceptions, to penetrate the darkness, to explain the enigma, our powers acquire strength, and we are trained for that state of pure and unclouded intellect which is reserved for us. It is here, too, that we acquire spiritual feelings and tastes. Were we always in the world, we should remain earthly and carnal; but in God's house we abstract ourselves from the concerns of time. If we worship aright, we shall have our minds filled with God, the subjects of his religion, and the anticipations of his glory: thus we shall be fitted for that state where time, and the affairs which interest us in time, shall be no longer. It is in God's house that our holy principles are matured and perfected; and that, obtaining clean hands and a pure heart, we are fitted to ascend that holy hill where the pure in heart see God.—And, finally, it is here we practise those songs of praise which we are to offer in heaven for ever. As the performers in a concert must first have studied their performance, and prepared themselves by private application to exhibit their skill in public; so, before we can join the

chorus of heaven, our hearts and our tongues must be practised in the heavenly work on earth. They sing, as it were, a new song; and no man could learn it, no man there could learn it; it must be learned on earth, or it cannot be sung in heaven. We shall, blessed be God, learn it here. Many of you have sung it long, and you are learning to sing it with more strength and feeling every day. I trust in this place many will join you; and here, "Worthy is the Lamb!" will be sung by you, and by thousands whose blasphemies will be turned into praise, with new fire, till, with your brethren, whom you have known and loved, with whom you have so often joined in chorus on earth, you are introduced into the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, and spend eternity

"In songs around his throne."

Such is the moral influence exerted upon society, and upon good men in particular, by the erection of places of worship, and the services to which they are appropriated. We shall,

Lastly, notice the zeal and liberality which good men have ever discovered in the erection of houses and altars to God.

The words of the text are an instance. When Araunah saw David coming, he went to meet him; and, when informed of the occasion,—"to buy the threshing floor, to build an altar to the Lord,"—he spontaneously makes him the offer of his threshing floor. His spirit catches the fire of David's; he sees the necessity of the case, the necessity of exertion; and, when life and death were in question, he disdained to weigh pence against interests so pressing. "Take," says he, "the threshing floor. And here, also, are oxen, and instruments of agriculture: take the oxen for sacrifice, and the instruments for wood. I give them freely for God, and for the public good." "All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king;" that is, he gave with a liberal and princely spirit; and thus, in his generous feelings, he was as much a king as David, though without the dignity. Nor was the gift itself, though not equal to the spirit, a small one. Convenience might have pleaded to retain the threshing floor as necessary to the conduct of his agricultural employ; it might be a part of his patrimony, endeared to him by the memory of his ancestors; his oxen and his implements were objects, the loss of which a man with less of a kingly spirit would have contemplated with regret. After all, if he could have brought his mind to part with them, had he been a scheming, penurious man, he would have calculated the necessity of the case, and have used it to get a higher price. But he makes no stipulation; he observed the purpose to be a religious one, and he offers all with a cheerful heart. The like spirit exists in David: he would not avail himself of the liberality of another to excuse himself. He did not say, "Another has contributed sufficient; there is no need of my contribution;" but, "I will not offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." He would not be deprived of the honour and happiness of giving in such a cause; he would not be deprived of that personal share and interest which a personal offering gave him in the whole transaction. Thus did these princely spirits contend for the opportunity of showing their respect for God's work and cause. And this is not a solitary instance. When Moses was about to build the tabernacle, he called for the offerings of

the children of Israel; and they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing; and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle, their gold, and their silver, and their fine linen, "till the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it," and even "too much." The same zeal we see at the building of Solomon's temple. In later ages, it was considered a work of piety to build synagogues; and, in modern times, among Christians, the same zeal, the same liberality, have been displayed.—For my part, I never behold the venerable edifices for public worship, most of them spacious and costly, and some of them magnificent, erected by your ancestors, but I feel a deep respect for their founders. It may be said, that superstition, rather than true Christian zeal, was the real cause of their great exertions; but I envy not the man who would too scrupulously scrutinize the motives of another, when the action is good. Much, perhaps, of human frailty might mix with these good deeds; but we envy not the man who is most successful in making the discovery, in raking up the mud, and fouling the stream. The fact is, that religion and religious worship have been by these means preserved; and we have stepped into the enjoyment of the benefits. A laudable portion of zeal, too, exists in the present age. Plans have been adopted, though not equal to the increased population; but, thank God, much has been done, and is doing. Many of you have honourably exerted yourselves, not only on this but many former occasions, to erect altars for your God, and to stay the plague. In various places through the country, once without God and his worship, we can now look round, and say,

> "These temples of his grace,
> How beautiful they stand!
> The honours of our native place,
> The bulwarks of our land."

Another altar to the honour of God is this day commended to your liberality; and as you rejoice in its erection, you will doubtless express that feeling by your gifts.

Such an erection was demanded by necessity. Our other chapels were crowded to excess, not a seat was to be obtained; and for many years, the population of the town required us to enlarge our borders. Were we to exclude the applicants, the seekers of salvation? God forbid. We have enlarged the tent of our Zion, and even this house will be filled. We solicit your aid, therefore, to nothing superfluous.

Let me also observe, that nothing of the spirit of party or opposition has contributed to raise this building. We are opposed to none; we wish to build on no man's foundation; but to stretch the line of usefulness beyond all, into the regions where men live who know not God, and say unto them, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." This is ground on which we have a right to tread, and we invade no right of others. We know not on what ground any religious body can say, that the sinners which every where surround us belong to them, and that we have no right even to try to save them: this we are sure of, that they belong to the world, and lie in the power of the wicked one; and in the name of Him who said, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," we will invite them into this house, and say, "To you is the word of this salvation sent." There was an altar at

Gibeon; but the perishing state of men demanded another altar in the threshing floor of Araunah; and it is erected. May it be to thousands the ark of safety!

In requesting your aid, therefore, we recommend to you the spirit of Araunah. Give, and give like him, with a princely, free, and generous spirit. The cause is the Lord's; the object is the salvation of men. Remember how much God has done for you; with what a rich and free spirit he has supplied your wants, and provided for your salvation. He who requires a trifle from you this night, not because he could not carry on his work without you, but because he wishes you to have the honour and blessing of giving,—he, I say, who requires this small token of your regard for his glory, gave his Son for you. "He spared him not, but delivered him up for us all." Remember, too, the value of immortal souls. The object of this building is to enlighten and save them. Great God, how important a charity, then, is it to build a house for the display of thy mercies to man! Hospitals may relieve the pains and cure the sicknesses of the body; but the body must ultimately die. Alms houses may receive the indigent; and gratifying it is to see age here at anchor in the haven, after all the storms of life. Institutions of various other kinds may well deserve your support; and their number adorns our age: but the charities which regard the soul rise beyond all comparison in importance. Here the good we do takes hold of eternity. Rays of light are kindled in benighted understandings; but they shine to the perfect day; a work is begun which is to be performed to the day of Christ. With the blessing of God upon our labours, here men will be taught to live, and taught to die; from this place colonies shall pass to heaven, and in heaven will look back with transport and gratitude to God and to you for the erection of a building where the music of a Saviour's name first sounded on their ears, and where his grace sanctified their hearts. What you give, then, you give for the best interests of man; and you erect monuments of your benevolence immortal as the soul of man, and durable as eternity itself.

But, lastly, we not only recommend to you the liberal, princely spirit of the Jebusite, but his piety. He gave his threshing floor and his oxen; but that did not suffice; he gave his prayers: "And Araunah said unto the king, The Lord thy God accept thee." We want your offerings; but, above all, your prayers. Without money places of worship cannot be erected; but they are erected in vain without piety and prayer. No; here is the building, but we want the glory; here is the word, but we want the power. My brethren, let us, then, if we would see the good of Zion, if we would witness an efficient ministry, if we would see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary, if we would live upon the fatness of his house, consecrate ourselves anew to God; let us bring holy hands, and lift them up in this temple; let us wash our hands in innocency, and so compass this altar; let us make intercessions and supplications for all men, that the plague may be stayed. With these dispositions I trust we are come. O, destroying angel, see the smoke of our sacrifice, and stay thine hand! O God, whom we have offended, regard thy pleading Son, whose name we here exalt and honour, and bless the work of our hands! And do you, who are come to worship with us on this occasion, give us the aid of

your prayers; pray for us now, and pray for us when you leave us, and say, with Araunah, "The Lord your God accept you." Amen. "The work of our hands establish thou it!"

SERMON XXI.—*The Death of Stephen.*

"When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep," Acts vii, 54–60.

THE shower of heavenly and miraculous influence, which fell on the disciples at the pentecost, was, in its effects, signally displayed in Stephen. He was "full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost;" not merely the faith of conviction, but of reliance,—resting fully upon the promises left by his exalted Saviour, and looking for their instant fulfilment.—The consequence was, he was also full of the Holy Ghost: he retained the pentecostal baptism, and derived an increase by believing prayer. He was also "full of power," of miraculous power; and did great wonders and miracles among the people. Nor was this all. He was "full of wisdom;" of heavenly skill in apprehending and stating the glorious truths committed to him; and of that power which results from wisdom, feeling, and the mighty, searching influence of the Holy Spirit, called "the demonstration of the Spirit:" so that none "could resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke."

This he proved in a disputation with the synagogue of the Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and with certain men of Cilicia and Asia. But when bad minds are silenced, they are not always convinced; and when they are convinced, they are not always persuaded. In this case argument was at an end; but diabolical subtilty and brute force remained; and these evil men suborned false witnesses to support a charge of blasphemy against this man of God. They dragged him before the council; and though they saw his face shine like that of an angel, with the radiance of holy ardour and inward joy, this only procured for him a partial hearing: they interrupted his speech, ran upon him, cast him out of the city, stoned him as a blasphemer; and thus, perhaps, vainly hoped that they had destroyed the truth, along with one of its most illustrious and early defenders.

The whole account is most deeply interesting; and to several of the scenes which it brings before us, we may profitably direct our attention. We observe,

I. The malignant excitement of the Jewish council. They "gnashed upon him with their teeth."

Such was the visible expression of their feeling: the nature of that feeling was manifest by the murder of that holy man which followed. We are shocked at the wickedness of which the heart of man is capable. It has many manifestations; but in no case is it so strongly marked as in the contrasts presented in instances of religious persecution. On the one hand, there is every thing to conciliate regard; and on the other, there are the worst of passions. See the meek and lowly Jesus; and, in contrast, hear the cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" See the face of the protomartyr shining like the face of an angel; and his enemies "gnashing upon him with their teeth." See the calm dignity of St. Paul, giving his reasons for becoming a Christian; and the Jews crying, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" See the resigned sufferers for Christ; and the callous Pharisaism which doomed them to the rack or the fire, and the surrounding fiends of men revelling in their torments.

But how is this to be accounted for? What is that principle in human nature which originates the whole? It is a principle which is widely diffused, and which presents our fall under one of its most humbling aspects. It is this,—enmity to the truth of God; and hatred to them who hold it, because they hold and proclaim it. We shall find ignorance in many, prejudice in still more, often a misled and abused populace; but, in the immediate inciters, and the authors of systematic bigotry and persecution, this is the origin. Man surrounds himself with religious delusions, and creates a false peace; he loves his refuges of lies, and trusts in his covenant with death; the beams of truth disturb his repose, and he hates it, as Satan in Milton hates the sun of nature. The intemperate man hears reasoning on righteousness; and, instead of trembling and repenting, he trembles and abhors. The formalist hears of an inward change, and spurns the "fanatics" who teach it. The Pharisee breathes threatening and slaughter against the doctrine which teaches, that by works of law no man is justified. Thus we see man determined to nourish the delusions which favour his corruptions, and to maintain a hopeless and wicked contest with his God. Yet, think not that this spirit is confined to ages of persecution. It exists in ages of professed liberality, when persecution ceases from circumstances, and not from principle. Be you faithful witnesses of the truth; and you will see the enmity, and often hear the growl of the savage within, though chained: and be faithful to yourselves; and you will often find, as to truth and its preachers, when they press hard upon your own views and errors, the inquiry rising, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" and that with no friendly feeling. If we hate the extreme expression of persecution, as in the shuddering scene in the text, let us hate the principle in ourselves.

II. In the midst of this commotion, how striking is the attitude of the martyr! "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven."

Two circumstances are here recorded. The fact, that he was "full of the Holy Ghost," being again mentioned, intimates that he had in that moment a special visitation of Divine strength and comfort. The moment was a trying one. His enemies were numerous, and their rage was great; so that from them he could expect no mercy. Then the visitation was granted. How often does this interesting circum-

stance of the seasonable interposition of God in behalf of his servants appear in the New Testament! Hence St. Paul remarks, that, while his outward afflictions abounded, his consolations by Christ abounded in proportion. "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Similar instances occur in the Old Testament. When the three Hebrew children were cast alive into the burning fiery furnace, "one like unto the Son of God" appeared among them, so that not a hair of their heads was singed, nor did the smell of fire pass upon their clothes. When St. John was banished to the isle of Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, he was favoured with the presence of his glorified Lord, and of the holy angels. All these facts are designed to teach us, that, if we trust in the Lord, mercy shall compass us about; and that he is, as it is emphatically expressed, "a very present help in the time of trouble."

The immediate effect of this visitation was, that "he looked up steadfastly into heaven;" not attracted by the vision, which appears to have been vouchsafed afterward, while he was looking up. The action carries its own comment. It was an appeal from the injustice of earth, to the eternal justice of Heaven; from merciless men, to a compassionate God. It was a devout committal of his cause into a supreme hand; a saying, "If it is right for me to be delivered, thou canst deliver me; no rage of man can prevent this: if it be thy will that I should die, behold, here I am; do with me as seemeth thee good." Do you not here catch an illustrious view of the manner in which true Christianity lifts man above himself; and how lofty a character is stamped upon a regenerate nature? A man whose eye is fixed on heaven tramples equally under foot the smiles and the frowns of earth. Here, indeed, is not the great man of the Roman poet;—

> "The tyrant's fierceness he beguiles,
> And the harsh brow, and the stern voice defies,
> And with superior greatness smiles."

Here is no defiance, no collecting of a man's resisting energies, resting on the centre of a dogged resolution; which is all that heathen virtue could reach. Here is no retreating of man into himself, in search of natural courage, or other principles to sustain him. The contrast is most impressive. In Christian heroism man goes out of himself to a higher power; his strength is in his weakness; he trusts in another, an almighty power; and thus confesses that he can do nothing. Stephen looks steadfastly up into heaven; commits his case there; and becomes mighty through God. O let us learn, that when we sink we rise; when we are thus nothing, we possess all in God.

III. We have the vision thus vouchsafed to the protomartyr while he was silently looking up to heaven: "He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

This vision was confined to him; and we may remark how appropriate it was to the two great purposes which to him were so important in that hour,—to confirm his faith, and to afford him courage and comfort.

As to his faith. It was a vision of Christ in his glory. Whether he had seen our Lord after his resurrection, does not appear; but whether, or not, he never saw him as now. He now saw him, not as an humbled sojourner on earth; not even as he appeared after his resurrection, in a kind of middle state; not even as majestically rising into the cloud which hid him from their sight; but in his glory, at the right hand of God. Here was faith, indeed, lost in vision; faith rewarded and confirmed by the evidence of vision; just as all true faith shall finally be rewarded. For true faith fixes upon the reality of things. They are, though they are not seen. They exist, though the distance which separates time from eternity intervenes; though the body's wall of partition rises up between us and them; and God does not work a miracle, as in the case of Stephen, to enable us to see within it. Still they are there; and the faith which the world despises, and sometimes persecutes, shall be crowned with the glorious sight. Ah! how near may that be! How soon may God lift up the veil, as to every one of us, and let the saint into the anticipated glories, and plunge the sinner into the forgotten horrors, of eternity! "Seeing, then, that ye look for such things," and that the sensible objects with which we are surrounded "shall shortly be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

But the vision with which Stephen was indulged was as appropriate to inspire courage and comfort, as to confirm his faith. It was an hour when he needed both; and the vision was adapted to minister the grace which the time of need required. It was a vision of Christ in his glory. He could not see that without thinking of the Lord's words in his last prayer: "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them. Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." The glory of Jesus, therefore, was that of his faithful confessor; and he saw that into which he himself should enter. He had but to advance one step farther in his glorious course, and then he should be safe for ever.

It was a vision of "Jesus at the right hand of God," the place of power and authority; every thing below, therefore, was under his management and control. If the sovereign Lord loosened the chain, and permitted the savage enemies of Stephen to destroy him, it was the part of the servant to bow. He had engaged, as a disciple, to bear the cross; to hate his life for Christ's sake; and now the master exacts the obedience, and the disciple cheerfully renders it. Still he is at the right hand of power, to control and limit the rage of man, to choose the moment when his servant should thus glorify him, to afford him almighty succour, to turn his death into a means of furthering his own eternal truth, and, by opening his glory, to receive the spirit which should be violently repelled from its earthly tenement by a shower of stones, to give force to his own lofty exhortation: "Fear not them which can kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do." O short and impotent arm of man! There lies the mangled body; what can you do more? Priests, rulers of the people! what can you do more? What if the Roman governor with his legion were at your command, what could you do more? The sufferer is in a rest you cannot disturb, with a Lord from whom you cannot separate him; and

the spirit which your threats could not subdue on earth, which triumphed against you here, triumphs over you above.

It was a vision of his Lord, standing and looking down upon him. How could he then faint? There was Christ tacitly exhorting him by his look, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;" and here was the servant, glad to suffer and die under the eye of his approving Lord.

These were the sights which animated Stephen; but let us remember, that, though in a different sense, yet in a sense most important, if we would run our course aright and perseveringly, we, too, must "look unto Jesus." He looks upon us; let us take care that we sin not. He looks upon us as our Lord and Master, and requires of us patiently to bear the cross, and to suffer with resignation. He looks upon us, and will give us the help we need. Let us look to him in habitual reverence and steadfast trust.

IV. It is not an uninteresting fact of the scene which the narrative of the text brings before us, that Saul, who was afterward called Paul, was present at the stoning of Stephen, and as one of the party of his persecutors.

Perhaps he was an agent of the Jewish council, to superintend the execution; for the witnesses who, according to custom, were to cast the first stone, laid their clothes at his feet, stripping themselves of their upper garments, that they might, without encumbrance, apply themselves to their sanguinary work. Or he might be a perfectly gratuitous volunteer in this service, which, to his unhallowed and fiery zeal, appeared so meritorious. This, however, was his first public act of persecution; and here he acquired his first taste for the blood of saints. It was on this occasion, probably, that his wicked ardour in the cause of relentless Pharisaism commended him to the notice of the ruling powers; so that he appears to have been a chief agent in the general persecution against the Church at Jerusalem that immediately followed; for when, two years afterward, we are informed that he applied to the high priest for authority to carry his persecuting rage as far as Damascus, the account is introduced expressly thus: "And Saul, *yet* breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord;" intimating that, after a course of fierce and cruel persecuting acts, his appetite for blood was not yet abated. "And Saul, *yet* breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem," Acts ix, 1, 2.

These circumstances are recorded for important reasons. To this day they teach and admonish. They teach us how much evil may remain in the heart under a show of virtue. See a man rigidly righteous externally. Open his heart, and it swells with pride, frowns with malignity, flames with anger. Against the Christians he was "exceedingly mad." He kept the law, as he thought; and yet he neither loved God, nor his neighbour. How would this trial wither the goodly show of many others!

We are taught by the case of Saul, how capable the conscience is of being perverted. See a man so scrupulous as to pay tithe, no doubt

beyond the letter of the law, of anise, mint, and cummin; but as to "the weightier matters of the law," a cruel implacable murderer. Yet he thought his conduct right: but it was not so, let us remember, on that account. With much seriousness and care ought we to inform our judgments, lest conscience betray us. It may become a false light. We may think it a light to heaven, when it is in truth a guide to hell.

The case of Saul also teaches us how hidden the spiritualities of the law may be to the most diligent student of it. Men may be learned indeed in the letter of the law; but without docility of temper, and devout prayer to the Father of lights, they will never understand its spiritual import. With the Bible in our hands we may be in deadly error; and of the Christian as well as of the Jewish dispensation it may be said, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

How truly is salvation of grace! The wonder of St. Paul shows this. "I obtained mercy!" he exclaims. We may bring less of guilt of some kinds than St. Paul, when we come to the mercy seat for pardon and holiness; but none of us can bring more of merit. It is the "ungodly" whom the Lord justifies; and saved as ungodly we must be, or we shall not be saved at all.

How different are the ways of God from our ways! Here is a striking instance. An apostle was wanting, of particular endowments, to be a more active and useful instrument than any of the rest. Had the wisdom of the Church been consulted, it would doubtless have fixed upon some eminent disciple already known and approved. But the wisdom of God determines very differently. Divine grace marches into the camp of the enemy, and seizes the head and captain of the persecutors, and converts him into an apostle. From a flame of unhallowed fire, the Saviour raises up a soul distinguished by meekness and humble love. He makes the dark prejudices of Pharisaism give place to the most perfect knowledge of the Gospel; and consecrates the "feet which had been swift to shed blood," to bear the Gospel through the vast extent of the Roman empire. What shall we say, but, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight?" And we ought always to stand prepared for this, that by means and instruments which mock all human confidence and calculation, God will convert the world.

V. Lastly. We have the death of Stephen.

We may here observe, though we do not dwell upon the subject, the peculiar manner in which Christianity teaches the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the future blessedness of the righteous.—It does not inculcate these truths doctrinally merely, but scenically. We are not left to hope waveringly, as some of the heathen were; nor to reason the subject into probability, as some of the philosophers have done; nor even to believe it simply on the authority of revelation. We are permitted, so to speak, in the authenticated narratives of the Holy Scriptures, to see it. We see it at the transfiguration, when Moses and Elias, who for ages had ceased to be inhabitants of this world, appeared in glory, and conversed with our Lord, on the subject of his approaching death. Our Lord, a perfect man, as well as God, ascends to heaven. He is here seen in glory; and Stephen surrenders his spirit into his hands, to be received into his presence. Such is the

glorious demonstration, that, as to this vital doctrine of our religion, we walk by sight, as well as by faith. I merely touch upon this subject.

The death of Stephen has many sweet and instructive aspects.

It was a death of prayer. He died calling upon God. He needed prayer to the end, because to the end he needed Divine support. No former grace which he had received was then sufficient; no visions with which he might be favoured could supersede the necessity of direct communications of Divine help and comfort. Still, therefore, he must call upon God. Yet his former grace was to him most important; for he knew how to call upon God; and the principles which rendered prayer available,—true humility, and true faith,—had been previously wrought in his heart. O let us now learn the habit, the power of prayer! We shall need it to our last struggle; and we shall not "call upon God" in vain, either in life or in death.

A death of faith. Christ was recognized by the dying martyr, and into his hands the soul was commended. The soul of Stephen had been thus committed to the merit of the Saviour's passion for justification; it had been committed to his care through life; and Christ was acknowledged as the Saviour, the only Saviour of souls, in death. The language of St. Paul was very similar. "I know," says he, "whom I have trusted; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." I have frequently thought that he refers here to the dying words of Stephen. He must often have called this scene to mind, to humble and to encourage him. When stoned himself he would think of Stephen; and when he was about to die, he who had so strangely gained life from the martyr's death, dies with the same confidence, and almost the same words. On Christ they both rested, as the Saviour of souls in that moment, and knew that there is no true peace in death where there is not trust in Christ.

A death of certainty. In the mind of Stephen there was no gloom as to the future; for the death of the Christian is the surrender of his spirit into the hands of his glorified Saviour. What a thought is this! View the language of Stephen in contrast with that of even the wisest of the heathen, and especially with that of unbelievers. "And now, O ye judges," said Socrates, "ye are going to live, and I am going to die. Which of these is best, God knows; but I suppose no man does." "I am going to take a leap in the dark!" exclaimed an infidel in the prospect of dissolution. The despairing sinner, who has neglected the salvation of the Gospel, trembles at the sight of the great gulf; and many unfaithful professors of Christianity in their last hours have painful doubts as to whether they shall sink or rise. It is your privilege to die like Stephen. The vision makes no difference in the case. St. Paul saw no vision, and yet he employs the same language of blessed assurance. Thousands of holy and devout Christians have died in the same manner. Live, then, for this glorious end.

A death of charity. The man of God was surrounded by fierce and bloody men, who were inflicting upon him the greatest injury in their power; yet a soul ripe for heaven can have no resentments; and he cries with a loud voice,—expressive, not only of a forgiving spirit, but of the utmost ardour of benevolence,—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" thus exemplifying the doctrine of his Lord, "I say unto you,

Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you."

A death of peace. "He fell asleep." He possessed the most perfect calmness in the midst of violence; and an expression of that calmness was perhaps left upon the countenance of his breathless remains. "He fell asleep; and devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Let us never forget what it was that led to all the excellencies of Stephen's character, and that gave him such peace and triumph in death: he was "full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost." It was his absolute confidence in Christ that secured to him that unutterable tranquillity of conscience which he possessed; and it was by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, the gift of which he had received by the same faith, that his mind was sanctified, and elevated, and strengthened. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

SERMON XXII.—*The Incarnation of the Eternal Word.*

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth," John i, 14.

THE Apostle St. Paul determined to "know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and he terms this the most excellent knowledge. These sentiments are fully justified by that striking declaration of our Lord, "It is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Whatever Christ is, whatever he did, whatever he taught, is, then, of the highest importance to man. Eternal life is treasured up in this knowledge, and eternally springs from it. It is the foundation of our faith; for how shall we believe in him of whom we have not heard?—of our worship; for we cannot, we ought not to, worship an unknown God;—of our love; for we must know his excellencies, we must collect with grateful care all the instances of his kindness toward us, to kindle this holy affection, and excite it to new and ever-increasing ardours.

Our text, and the verses connected with it, place our Saviour before us in views so impressive, that it is impossible for us devoutly to contemplate them without an increase of knowledge, faith, and love.

"In the beginning," before time was, before a created nature existed, "was the Word;" "and the Word was with God," and, therefore, in an important sense, distinct from him; "and the Word was God," therefore co-equal and one with him. No scheme of doctrine can explain and harmonize this passage, but that which admits a distinction of persons in the unity of one Godhead.

"The same,"—mark the emphasis,—"the same" Word, of whom he speaks; the same Jesus whom they had seen; at whose feet they had sat; who had been "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" "the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made

that was made;" whether angels, or men, or inanimate nature. And yet this Word, this Divine Person, this almighty Creator, arrayed in the ample vesture of all the Divine perfections, clad himself in the mantle of frail, and weak, and humiliated humanity. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

To the successive clauses of this important passage of holy writ I proceed to direct your attention.

I. Our Lord is denominated the Word.

The use of this term is almost peculiar to the Apostle John. He lived the longest, and he wrote the last; and he lived, too, to see the springing up of those heresies which afterward inundated the Church of Christ. There was, doubtless, a reason for the application of this term to our Lord; not merely from its propriety, but from the circumstances of the case. It is likely that, as the followers of Plato had used this term to characterize that inferior and created being who, in his system, framed the visible world, the term had been assumed by some of the early heretics, and used to express an inferior conception of our Lord's nature. The apostle, therefore, seizes it from the enemy; fixes its sense, as it is used by the prophets and early Jewish commentators when applied to the second person in the trinity, as the expected Messiah; and attaches to it for ever the idea of positive Divinity. The term has two senses, equally descriptive both of the nature and office of our Lord. It is personal and official.

1. Personal. It signifies reason or wisdom.

In this sense it indicates the infinite intelligence of Him who was made flesh. He is the Wisdom of God; "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," answering in this and every other perfection of his nature, as exactly to all the boundless attributes of God, as the impression upon the wax to the seal. In the amplitude of his mind he compasses the Divine perfections and counsels of the Father; for "no man knoweth the Father, but the Son." Nor is this a speculative point. We are all most deeply interested in it; because it is this which gives an absolute infallibility to his teaching. He fully knew the mind of God; and he has expressed it to man. It must, therefore, be true.

2. Official. It is by speech that wisdom is declared to others.

For this reason also he is called the Word, the Speech, the Mouth of God. Mediately he spake to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he hath spoken to us by the Son. And in proportion to the dignity of the Speaker is the clearness of this revelation. In the Word we have no type, no veil. God speaks to us without intervention, and opens to us the counsels of his truth and grace. O beauteous revelation! No longer is the veil kept upon the glory, as under the law; no longer are we left to decypher the enigma, the characters and difficult symbols of Jewish ceremonies; no longer are we left to ask with respect to prophets, "Of whom doth the prophet speak? of himself, or of some other man?" The mists which hung over the dawn of revelation are dissipated; the Sun itself has burst upon our view; and in the teaching of Him who might truly say, "I am the light of the world," truth high as its Author in dignity, but condescending as that Author in simplicity, is taught to man.

But something more than teaching was wanted; something which should give us an interest in these truths, and make them available to us. Without this they had been a splendid vision; the noblest exercise for the intellect, but nothing more. We are, therefore, taught in the text,

II. That "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" that by that vast stoop of condescension he might reach the depth of our condition, and raise us from it.

"The Word was made flesh." By this expression is meant human nature. "All flesh is grass;" "to thee shall all flesh come." The term is used throughout the Scriptures to denote human nature. Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, the nature of man.

The incarnation of Christ is to be considered,

1. As a deep humiliation. He "emptied himself."

This is a singular and inexplicable phrase. It is not, however, presumptuous to suppose that there was in heaven some distinct visible glory of each person in the Godhead, marking a special presence. The special presence of the Son of God might be manifested in an obscure manner while he remained in the flesh, until he returned to "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." As he became the substitute and representative of sinners, it was necessary that he should take the humble rank of the guilty. He descended, therefore, from the height of heaven to the humblest condition of earth.

He was thus humbled,

2. That he might familiarize himself with the human condition, as a qualification for his office as our High Priest.

Such a High Priest became us. There was a fitness in his assumption of our nature, that he might sympathize with the afflicted. There is a correspondence between the feelings of Christ's humanity, and the compassion of his Godhead. There is no jar here. One resulted from the perfection of his nature, the other from personal experience; and both together form one fit and sympathizing High Priest, and lay a foundation for our trust under all the sorrows and trials of life. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii, 11–18. Having such a High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, where he exercises the infinite mercy of God, and the tender sympathy of a spotless human nature, we may well possess our souls in patience, and repose a rejoicing confidence in him, under all the temptations and afflictions which are incident to the present state of our being.

3. To embody and exemplify his own religion.

In the entire spirit and conduct of our Lord, we see his doctrine, living and acting. He has left us an example that we should tread in his steps; and "every one that saith he abideth in him ought to walk as Christ also walked." His example was Divine, and yet human; a

perfect model, and yet imitable by those who have redemption through his blood, and are made partakers of his quickening and sanctifying grace.

4. But the crowning purpose of our Lord's incarnation was, that he might suffer for the sins of men.

His body was prepared for this very purpose. He was "made flesh," that he might hunger and thirst, endure the contempt of the people, weep over Jerusalem, feel the hour and the power of darkness agonize in the garden, and die upon the cross, and thus pay the penalty, the rigid satisfaction, death for death, and redeem a guilty world. O joyful news! tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people! The ransom is paid down; "the Word was made flesh" to pay it: and shall the blessing of pardon, of peace, of holiness, of eternal life, purchased at such a price, and now freely offered to our acceptance, be refused by us? God forbid. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

III. Yet, says the apostle, in this humbled state "we beheld his glory."

Others beheld it not; but his disciples beheld it. Allusion is here made to the tabernacle in the wilderness, within which was the shechinah, or cloud of the Divine glory. The outside presented nothing striking. It was not like the temple, of which the disciples admired the "goodly stones" and beautiful architecture. The tabernacle was made of boards, covered with skins. The glory was within. The Jews looked upon our Lord's lowly condition, while he tabernacled among them; and they discovered in him "no beauty nor comeliness that they should desire him;" and hence he was "despised and rejected of men." But his disciples "saw his glory," which he "manifested forth" among them.

Of this "glory" two things are affirmed in the text.

1. That it was "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

In other words, it was Divine glory; for the term "only begotten" is used to express his Divine nature, as the Divine and eternal Son of God; or, as it is expressed in the Nicene Creed, which embodies the opinions of the best ages of the Church of Christ, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father." Of his Divinity our Lord gave abundant proofs during his abode upon earth. He showed that there was one in the tabernacle greater than the tabernacle. His Divinity was seen in his teaching. What a wondrous charm was that which produced so strong an impression, that "when he had ended his sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority!" And when the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take him, when he was teaching in the temple, those men were disarmed by his word, and having silently retired from his presence, when it was said to them, "Why have ye not brought him?" the only answer they were able to give was, "Never man spake like this man!" John vii, 32, 46. When our Lord taught he gave demonstration that a more than human voice spake, and that a more than human mind poured forth its wisdom. It is not true, that Jesus was the most unsuccessful of preachers. "Great multitudes followed him," and were prepared by his ministry for the full revelation of evangelical truth

which was made at the pentecost, and the rich baptism of the Spirit which was vouchsafed on that memorable day.

Our Lord supplied proofs of his Divinity in his works of power. He was full of healing virtue; so that even to touch the hem of his garment was sufficient to remove diseases, otherwise incurable. The "Come forth" which awakened Lazarus was but a softened accent of the voice which, rolling through the caverns of the earth, shall awaken all the dead. But the apostles saw his concealed glory in his transfiguration, when "the fashion of his countenance was altered," "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was light and glistering;" "white as the light;" as "white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them." They saw his glory in his resurrection; for he rose, having "life in himself;"—and in his ascension to heaven, when "a cloud received him out of their sight."

2. It is affirmed of this "glory" that it was "full of grace and truth."

It was a glory, not like that of Sinai, but softened, and filled in every part, and in all its manifestations, by grace and truth. He communicated truth in the most gracious manner, and for the most gracious ends. In other words, in the glory of Christ were embodied and exemplified, not only the will and counsels, but the grace, the kindness, the compassion of God.

To enter into this subject, let us observe, that God only knows himself; and without a revelation, symbolical or literal, man could never have known him. Now, any mere declaration of God, and of the attributes of his nature, would have been an imperfect manifestation of God, because not sufficiently impressive. Abstract truths and virtues affect us but partially. Describe benevolence in words; but how slightly are we affected by the most perfect description, in comparison with its exemplification in men who seek out the sick, dry up the widow's tears, and dive into the prisons of the captive! We may describe ministerial zeal; but how different does it appear in the Apostle Paul, impelling him to those mighty efforts which filled the Roman empire with the sound of salvation! God has therefore made himself visible to us, so to speak, in action, that we may know him more perfectly, and that our knowledge may impress us with a deeper effect.

He has discovered himself to us in nature. The universe is a manifestation of God. Unlimited space exhibits his immensity; the assemblage of worlds, the greatness of his power; his wisdom appears in the arrangement of the mighty whole; the harmony of universal nature demonstrates his unity; the benevolent contrivances which every where meet the eye of the attentive observer declare his goodness; and the occasional storms, plagues, and other calamities which take place, demonstrate his terrible anger and majesty.

The giving of the law was a visible manifestation of God. It declared his authority, his purity, and his justice: but there was one perfection of the Godhead, which still wanted its full expression,—his graciousness; that perfection which is made up of his goodness, and consists in showing kindness, and in mercy to the erring, the guilty, and the wretched. Nature has not expressed it throughout all her wondrous manifestations of God. Nor had the law expressed it; for what of grace was known was not from the law but from Him who is

"full of grace and truth," but whose full manifestation was not yet come. The rays of grace and kindness which play among the parting clouds of the world's darkness in the elder times were emanations of light from him, the harbingers of his personal coming. He came, and his glory was "full of grace and truth;" and this perfection of God, his love, his grace to the guilty, received its full manifestation. Mark it in Christ, who is so truly said to be the visible image of the invisible God. It is seen in his teaching. We have already spoken of its Divinity; now observe its grace. It is seen in his compassions for all who are labouring under temporal suffering; the sick, the maimed, the demoniacs:—in the forgiveness of sins:—to many troubled consciences did he give repose:—in his friendship with his disciples; showing how God in very deed dwells with man upon earth:—in his sufferings:—we have seen that he took flesh that he might suffer; and what but love sustained him in all the scenes of wo through which he was called to pass? At any stage of that sad process he might have rescued himself; but love carried him on, till the word, "It is finished," showed that the work was done.

He still displays his grace in the standing ministry of the word.—There his offers of salvation are made; and by his ambassadors, whom he qualifies and sends, he beseeches sinners to be reconciled to God. Nor is his grace less displayed in his intercession and advocacy with God. He ever lives to plead the merit of his death in behalf of his Church and the world; and with him there is mercy to pardon the guilty, and overflowing goodness for ever to supply the wants of those who believe in him and love him.

We may learn from this subject,

1. That Christ is to be worshipped.

He was God from everlasting, "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the world was made." All things were made by him, whether animate or inanimate, rational or brute. And the almighty Creator of the universe claims the highest homage of his intelligent offspring, and to him ceaseless praises and thanksgivings are justly due, for his creating power and wisdom; and especially for his assumption of our nature, his obedience unto death, for our redemption, and the blessings of salvation which he showers upon all who "believe in him with the heart unto righteousness." "Give unto the Lord, therefore, all ye kindreds of the earth, give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name."

2. That we should trust in the sufficiency of his atonement.

The death of Jesus Christ was the sacrifice of a Divine person.

> "His Godhead with the manhood join'd,
> For every soul atonement made."

Let the self-condemned transgressor of the law of God, who has no merit of his own to plead, confide in the perfect sacrifice of Christ, and so shall the pardoning mercy of God be freely extended to him; for we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him which

believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii, 24–26. And even when our persons are justified, and our names are written in heaven, our dependence upon the sacrifice of Christ is absolute and uninterrupted. Our reliance upon the blood of atonement, therefore, should be entire, and never withdrawn till our salvation is completed in the glories of the heavenly state

3. We should apply to Christ in all cases of want.

However numerous and great may be our necessities, he is able to supply every need, and to answer every prayer. We can need no greater encouragement than that contained in the text, to present our requests to him. He is "full of grace;" and therefore disposed to confer upon us blessings of the richest value, and in endless variety. He is "full of truth;" and therefore never deceives those who look to him for the fulfilment of his word. All his promises are sure; for his mercy and truth endure throughout all generations.

4. Let us imitate him; and unite grace and truth in all our intercourse with mankind.

An ardent benevolence to all men, producing a readiness to serve them, and to promote their interests in every possible way, is inculcated upon us as an essential branch of the religion of Christ; and to this we should join the most inviolable fidelity; and so shall we resemble him whose name we bear, and stand approved before his tribunal "Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Sermon XXIII.—*The Triumph of the Gospel.*

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place," 2 Cor. ii, 14.

This lofty exclamation was excited by the successes with which it had pleased God to favour the apostle, and his coadjutors in the work of preaching the Gospel. He proposed to visit Corinth; and gives the reason why he had not fulfilled that purpose. He did not use "lightness;" but he was not at his own disposal. God had opened to him doors in Troas and Macedonia; and the work assigned to him in those places had detained him. Then, reviewing his success, and looking round on scenes of opening labour, his exulting spirit bounds forth in the sublime strain of the text, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."

Nor is there any exaggeration here. The apostle was endowed with the prophetic spirit. He knew to what ends the work he had begun was tending; he had, in no inconsiderable degree, triumphed in every place where he had ministered; and he had planted those principles which he knew would accomplish a moral conquest yet more extensive and more glorious.

We call your attention,

I. To the triumphs of the Gospel by the apostles.

The text contains an allusion to military triumphs; and the terms used by the apostle would suggest to a Greek or a Roman a splendid

spectacle, exhibited with all the pomp of circumstance. But there was nothing of that kind here. The victory and the triumph were noiseless; and at that time were scarcely noticed by the higher classes of mankind; but for that very reason the effects were more powerful and glorious.

1. It was the triumph of truth over error.

The errors of paganism were rooted in education; they incited to sinful pleasures, were supported by rank, spread through all minds, defended by subtlety, and often recommended by eloquence. What a triumph did Christianity achieve over the wisdom of Greece! Who goes to that now for the fundamental principles of religion? Not one. "Where is the wise? Where is the disputer? Where is the scribe? Where is the wisdom of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" He has, so far as Greece is concerned; and, as for the mythology of Rome, although it commanded the homage of one hundred and twenty millions of souls, it is found now only in school books, the ridicule of children.

2. It was a triumph over persecution.

No system was ever so persecuted as the Christian religion was, and nothing affords a more striking view of the deep depravity of man, than that it should be so persecuted. It was light, mercy, and salvation; it was the news of an incarnate God dying for men; it was the offer of pardon in his name. Its voice to man was mild and inviting; the blessings it offered were adapted to remove all the evils of individuals and society; it spread before men the glories of immortality; and yet they killed its prophets, and stoned the messengers that were sent unto them.

Nor was this a solitary case. All ranks, in all places, magistrates and mobs, priests and people, set themselves against the Lord, and his Anointed. Yet the Gospel triumphed. Ten persecutions wasted the Church, but could not destroy it. To this day Christianity exists; and thus we are the proof that Christ founded his Church upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Yet what a struggle has this been! a struggle now in the world.—Christians conquered not by arms; for they rebelled not. They conquered by principle and patience; in a word, by the might of their meekness. One word of Christ explains the whole subject: "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Thus the power of tyrants was limited in the view of the Christian, and was despised. It might expel from home; but it could not cast out from the family of God. It might shut up in prison; but at midnight the free spirit sang praises to its God. It might stretch the body on the rack; but the peace of the soul was the gift of Christ; and the world, no, not by all its devilish arts of torment, could take it away. The Jewish council gnashed with their teeth upon Stephen; but his face shone like the face of an angel. There was the triumph of his calmness. He was stoned. He kneeled down, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Here was the triumph of his faith. He prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Here was the triumph of his charity. "When he had said this, he fell asleep." The softest expression is here used to describe the most violent death; to intimate that calm and undisturbed spirit in which the protomartyr died. Here

was the triumph of patience. The same remarks will apply to the whole case. Devout men carried him to his grave. They did not forsake even the bones of the honoured servant of Christ. They were ready to be stoned too; and thus in all the first ages multitudes rushed forward to be baptized in the place of the dead; for the spirit in which Christians suffered, and the hopes in which they died, carried the conviction of the truth of their religion to the hearts of beholders, and kindled a hallowed ambition to wear the same crown of a glorious martyrdom.

3. It triumphed over principles which dissocialized and oppressed society.

Under the tyranny of various principles, which inflicted misery in innumerable forms upon mankind, it found the world groaning; and it made war upon them all. It subdued them in many individuals; and it planted itself against them in a warfare never to be terminated until it should subdue them throughout the world.

These principles are too many to be separately dwelt upon; but I select one,—selfishness. See how this fatal principle operated among the heathen.

Look at their poor. The heathen world had no almshouses, no asylums for age, infancy, or misfortune. The ruins of palaces, temples, theatres, and aqueducts meet the wondering eye of the traveller; but there is not a ruin of which it can be said, "This was a house of mercy."

Look at their slaves. The number of these unhappy persons was almost incredible. Some Roman citizens had from ten to twenty thousand of them, placed at the sole mercy of their owners, to be tortured or killed, as their savage tempers required. No laws were enacted for their protection; for selfishness never suffered their individual nature to be connected with the common nature. The heathen lived only to themselves. Of blessing and benefiting others they had no notion. With them the only passion that combated selfishness was patriotism. They would give up many things for the state; yet that was so unjust a principle, that it became only a kind of public selfishness, in which every individual had his interest. Patriotism was selfishness in another form.

Look at their religion. It had no precepts of forgiveness or charity. It was merely form and name; and left revenge and hardness of heart among the very virtues.

Now look at the triumphs of Christianity over selfishness. The first general collection among the Gentile Churches was for the relief of poor strangers, the saints in Jerusalem; and the apostle exults in it: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," 2 Cor. ix, 15. And why need I dwell upon the many affectionate precepts of our religion? "The poor ye have always with you; and whensoever ye will ye may do them good. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

Consider the manner in which Christianity regards slaves: "As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them. Art thou called, being a servant? Care not for it. But if thou canst be made free, use it rather." When Onesimus was converted by the instrumentality of St. Paul, the apostle sent him back to his master, ex

horting Philemon to receive him, "not now as a slave, but as a brother beloved."

Consider the public spiritedness connected with Christianity: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Look at the spirit of charity with which this religion is endued: "If thy brother sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day say, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. In malice be ye children;" that is, be as free from it as children.

4. But the Gospel especially triumphed in the salvation of men.

This was its noblest triumph; and in this it triumphed "in every place." It triumphed over the ignorance and obduracy of men. St. Paul draws a striking picture of a person coming into the assemblies of the Christians, where the truth of God was proclaimed, and the gracious power of the Holy Spirit exerted. "If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth," 1 Cor. xiv, 24, 25.

It triumphed over their gloomy apprehensions of futurity. Christ came to "deliver those who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage;" and those who believe in him, not only "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," but "desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."

It triumphed over their vices. "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi, 9–11.

It triumphed over death itself. "Them that sleep in Jesus," says St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "will God bring with him." Before the promulgation of the Gospel no such language could have been used among them. The apostle might walk in the burial place at Thessalonica, and truly exult while he marked the tombs of his converts, as them that slept in Christ, and anticipate the day when they should rise again, glorious and immortal, and with himself and all the pious dead be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, in order that they might be for ever with him.

Such were the triumphs of the Gospel. We attend,

II. To the agency by which they were effected: "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."

All is ascribed to a Divine agency; and without this they would have been, like others, powerless preachers. This agency was marked,

1. In the selection of the instruments.

Some of their qualifications were natural; others, acquired; others, supernaturally communicated: but it is impossible to see that variety of qualities brought into this sacred service without acknowledging the hand of God.

It belongs to him to send forth his labourers; and this supposes

selection. There was the bold simplicity of Peter; the soft persuasiveness of John; the fire of Stephen; the pointed, searching, epigrammatic turn of James. There was still a fit instrument in opposition,—Saul; and he was seized in the very camp of the enemy by victorious mercy; and the ardour, learning, and strength of that mighty spirit were bound for ever by zeal and love unquenchable to that sacred cause which he had persecuted.

This adapted character of God's instruments is marked in all future times, and in the peculiar seasons of the Church's visitation peculiarly so. In the reformation what an adaptation of character do we witness! Luther and Melancthon, though one in heart and judgment, differed greatly from each other. "I clear the ground," says Luther, "and Melancthon scatters the seed." The learning and moderation of Cranmer, the judgment of Ridley, and the popular eloquence, the searching wit, and the downright honesty of Latimer, admirably qualified them to co-operate in the great work to which they were called.

We see the same wise arrangement in still later times. The unwearied activity, and the convincing and illuminating mind of Wesley, were combined with the hallowed vehemence of Whitefield, the devotional ardour of Fletcher and Pearce; and the same diversity is observable in the eminent men to whom the honour will be, in all future ages, accorded of being fathers of modern missions.

In the ordinary ministry there is the same variety and adaptation. There are sons of thunder, and sons of consolation; teachers of first principles, and those who carry on the believer to perfection; those who flash upon the conscience, and those who allure the affections. As in nature we have the fulminating cloud, and the bright sky; the gentle breeze, and the resistless gale; the descending torrent, and the insinuating dew; while the sun, as the ruler of the atmosphere, and the lord of seasons, tempers and directs all, to form the perfect year, and cover the earth with plenteousness; so God worketh all in all. 'He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

2. In their personal experience.

All other qualifications are nugatory and inefficient without this. The Gospel triumphed over the early ministers of Christ before they triumphed over the world. So necessary is personal experience, that neither preacher nor people can understand the Gospel efficiently without it. Who can know what true repentance is, but by his own brokenness of heart? Who can know what faith is, but by the personal possession and exercise of that principle? In the same manner only can any man understand the nature of a holy walk with God, of spiritual conflicts, and the renewal of the heart. Little does learning or study advance us in this knowledge. Without experience we know the Gospel but vaguely, and can only discourse about its truths in a vague manner. We may walk about Zion, and mark her bulwarks; but unless we enter into the temple of God, we can form but a very inadequate conception of its glory, of the hallowed services which are there rendered to Him that dwells between the cherubim, and of the intercourse which his spiritual worshippers have with him.

Here then was the agency of God. "He hath reconciled us to him

self by Jesus Christ," says the apostle; "and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation." He had won the heart to himself; and from that heart, inflamed with love and pity, they spoke to the world. In their ministry there were no cold dogmas; there was no inflated rhetoric, fine and frigid,—the body of eloquence without the soul. They spoke with the intenseness of compassionate concern; and they "persuaded men."

3. This agency of God is shown in the effects produced.

We have seen what these effects were,—the salvation of men; and we need only fix upon the salvation of one individual to prove that a direct agency of God must be supposed. We know that an attempt has been made to account for the early spread of Christianity, by Gibbon and other infidels, without Divine interposition. This is not surprising. They had no conception of Christianity but as a system of opinions. Their conduct is all natural and consistent; for they had no notion of the work of God in the heart. The wonder is, that those who acknowledge the regenerating and saving effects of the Gospel should refer them to God rather in an indirect than a direct manner.

Look, then, at the fact, the salvation of an individual; and I ask, How is this to be accounted for, but by the direct agency of God? What is that individual according to the Scriptures? Not a being who, having both will and power, only wants light. Far otherwise. In him dwelleth no good thing. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Now how is the Gospel to operate upon such a one independent of the influence of its Author? We detract nothing from the perfection of the Gospel, nor the suitableness of the instruments by whom it is preached. All is perfect, and adapted to answer the end designed. The perfect luminary of day throws his beams upon creation, and arrays it in the beauty of his reflected rays; but to the sightless eye, light is darkness, and beauty gloom. And then, in regard to the agents, the minister may have a pleasant voice, and play skilfully upon the instrument; but the hearer is deaf; or, to use the metaphor of the text, he is "a savour of Christ," a sweet odour in itself. Yet as to diseased persons, such odours may be offensive and noxious; so there is truth in the Gospel, but the man hates truth; there is love, but his heart is a heart of stone; there is argument, but he is indifferent to the subject, or unwilling to be convinced; and the odour of Christ is offensive to him who perishes,—that is who remains in his lost condition.

My brethren, you see then what more is necessary; a work of God, not merely without, but within, even in the heart. The necessity and reason of this rest upon man's fallen condition; and that must be denied, or held unscripturally, before the doctrine of direct Divine influence can be rejected.

But we rejoice to see the bright demonstrations of this glorious and crowning doctrine; that which makes the Gospel the "power of God unto salvation." Does the ignorance of the soul give way? It is "God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, who shines in the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Is there a stirring of spiritual life? "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Is there faith? It is "the operation" and "the gift of God." Is the act of pardon passed? God is present; for "it is God that justifieth." How know I

this? How can I know it? The Spirit who knows the mind of God, and searcheth all things, comes and bears the joyful testimony. Am I renewed in the spirit of my mind? There is a new creation, a making something out of nothing; which is the peculiar work of God. Am I preserved in Christ Jesus? He upholdeth this part of his work, as well as the natural creation, by the word of his power. We are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

What a lesson is this to ministers, in all their labours to depend upon God for success! "I have planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

What a lesson for you, my brethren, that, having all received this quickening influence, more or less, to empower you to hear, to turn to God, and to believe with the heart unto righteousness, you should be faithful to it in its various stages! Are you in a state of penitence? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Have you believed, so as to have tasted that the Lord is gracious? Go on unto perfection, and diligently persevere, till our Gospel fully triumphs over you, putting down all that is within you under the feet of Christ, and you triumph with him in glory.

We have,

III. The instrument by which all this is effected: the preaching of the Gospel, expressed in the text by the beautiful figure to which we have before adverted; the manifestation of the odour of the knowledge of Christ.

Odours were much used in the east. They revived the languid, and refreshed the weary, in those hot climates; and hence they afforded a natural and elegant figure to express whatever was grateful and reviving to the mind. This is the view which the apostle so often expresses in more literal language: "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." To Jews and Greeks the preaching of Christ crucified was foolishness; but to the saved it was Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. To them that remained in their perishing state, the same preaching is an odour of death; to the saved it is an odour of life,—grateful and vital.

What, then, was there in the knowledge of Christ to warrant this representation of it? The qualities which make this knowledge so fragrant and grateful to saved men are too numerous to dwell upon; but I shall select two as instances

1. Its authority.

That which has no authority from God is not religion, properly speaking; for as the very word and idea of religion import, a mutual binding of man to God in faith and duty, and of God to man in promise and covenant, almighty God must be a party, both to prescribe his will, and engage himself by promises. If the religious systems of men, therefore, had been as good as they were bad, they could have had no authority. They embodied no commands of God, and contained none of his promises. However excellent they might have been in themselves, they could only be regarded as speculations, and could therefore sustain no hope.

On the contrary, here comes a religion from God, stamped and sealed, as such, visibly, and in the sight of all. Prove that it is from God, and it is no longer a speculation. If there is not proof, it is nothing but theory, however beautiful. Hence the folly of those who would set up the internal evidence of the truth of Christianity against its external evidence. That alone would leave the question a mere matter of opinion. It is its miracles, its prophecies, and its mighty efficiency, that connect God with it, and settle the whole question.

Behold, then, the reason of its reviving and grateful odour to "the saved." They had no certainty in what most concerns man, even in religion. Like the dove of Noah, they found no rest for the sole of the foot. The spirit flew over a troubled, muddy, and limitless ocean.—The heavens above were dark and lowering; and the element below heaved in restless and turbid waves. But in the Gospel they found rest. Wanted they truth? It is here assured to them; for what is from God is light, and no darkness at all. Inquired they for the will of their Maker? Here he had prescribed it himself. Felt they the need of an atonement? Here God himself had provided the Lamb for a burnt offering. Needed they the comfort of promises? Here they were found proceeding from lips which could not lie. The very "book of the covenant is sprinkled with blood;" and the Testament is ratified by the death of the Testator. Inquired they after future being? The resurrection and ascension of Christ had deprived death of its sting, and brought life and immortality to light. Thus was the fainting spirit revived. "We have found truth!" might they exclaim, "the truth, the truth of God; the truth which is according to godliness; the truth which bringeth salvation!" The name of Christ was to them like ointment poured forth, diffusing all the powers of its vital fragrance.

2. The second quality was its adaptation.

There was nothing here but what the case of man required; and there was every thing that it did require. Let us review the evidence of this.

The number of human beings to whom the Gospel has been proposed is beyond calculation; and their variety of circumstance is as great. If to one of them it has been unadapted, to that person it has been inefficient and useless. But if to all it has been equally adapted, and efficient to give light, life, comfort, and salvation, then, indeed, it is worthy of all acceptation. In this case it is not only from God, but manifestly embodies God's condescending love to man.

Let us try this point. The true knowledge of ourselves is revealed in the knowledge of Christ. How many books have been written to display the human heart; to lay open its hidden springs; that men may see themselves, and be cured of their evils! Yet how little of true knowledge of our nature most of them contain! The greatest masters shall employ whole dramas in developing one passion; and yet how little of themselves most men, after all, see in such performances! How exceedingly partial are they at the best! But suppose a thousand millions of people in the world all looking into this perfect law. Every one sees his own picture. He feels that he sees it. "He is convinced of all; he is judged of all."

Take another point illustrative of the perfect adaptation of the proposed remedy to the case of man. It is declared to be a manifestation of special wisdom. Its wisdom is stated to be in this, the forgiveness

of man through faith in a sacrifice of so peculiar a nature, that, while mercy is exhibited, the justice of God is honoured, and made even more illustrious. Now, we grant, that, till men know their case, they may stumble at this; and the fragrance of the odour of this knowledge may not be felt. But when our real case is apprehended, what wonderful adaptation see we then! To them who are saved Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Who, then, asks for a better sacrifice, than that exhibited in the Gospel? Who flees to another refuge? Not one. "Here is firm footing; here is solid rock;" and guilty fear gives place to filial confidence. Wherever the experiment is made, it is successful. None trust in Christ, and are confounded.

Take a third instance of this wonderful adaptation. The Gospel prescribes virtues; but we have nothing pushed out of the bounds and limits of practicability. In Christianity there are no imaginary creations, never to be reached; no inflated and exaggerated pictures out of keeping with human condition; there is no dissonance of principles. All that it prescribes is felt to be what every individual wants; nay, pants after, if his heart be right. That humility, that meekness, that patience, that charity; they are what I want, and what God has engaged to give.

Finally, in the variety of human life, in this knowledge of Christ, I see all I want.

I am never out of the range of the directions, promises, and hopes of the Bible. Youth cleanses its way by taking heed to it as the word of God; age stays its feeble steps upon the staff of its promises. Widows and orphans, there is a word for you. "A father to the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation." Are you in trouble? God is a present help. Are you sick? If any man be afflicted, let him pray; for the Lord is nigh them that call upon him. Are you dying? Your Saviour comes to you, as to the grave of Lazarus, and says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me shall never die." O, sweet as the odours of the sanctuary is this odour of the knowledge of Christ!

This knowledge the apostles manifested. They manifested it by their spirit. They were a savour of Christ; richly imbued with his mind; and, wherever they went, they could not be hid.

They manifested it by preaching. This is God's appointed method It is like opening a box of odour, the fragrance of which is diffused in every place.

Different persons are differently affected by odours. Where disease exists, odours are often offensive; as in persons affected by malaria at Rome. Such is their state that they cannot bear the scent of flowers in a room. You may, you will, distaste the odour of the knowledge of Christ, so long as you resist conviction; so long as you feel not your sin and helplessness; so long as a worldly spirit reigns in your hearts. The consequences of this are tremendous. Cherishing a love of sin, and an aversion for the knowledge of Christ, the odour of that knowledge will be an odour of death unto death; an accumulation and aggravation of death, both spiritual and eternal.

At the same time, the blessings consequent upon the cordial reception of the knowledge of Christ are incalculable. To the penitent believer the ministry of the word is an odour of life unto life; a means of that life of grace which shall be perfected in life eternal.

SERMON XXIV.—*Promises obtained through Faith.*

"Who through faith obtained promises," Hebrews xi, 33.

IN this chapter we have a summary of the great and noble acts of faith, illustrated by examples. The clause which has just been read describes the experience of ancient saints in this interesting particular, that it "obtained promises." The important process may be thus laid down: God made promises, either general, or by special revelation. The parties in question were satisfied that God had spoken, and that he had spoken to them. This was enough. They believed God. Discouraging probabilities often interposed; but their faith staggered not. They prayed, waited, trusted, and obtained the blessings promised.

I have brought this subject before you with very serious thought. I fear that many of us will find that our experience does not come up to the standard; at least, as we feel it ought to do. In many respects the promises of God which we believe to be the subjects of present experience are not obtained by us. In a sense we believe them; but our faith does not obtain. Here, then, I argue, there must be some great and serious defect; and to detect this, I have selected the subject before us. Let us then,

I. Inquire whether there are not promises made to us which we do not obtain.

Many of these promises are special, but not all; as we see in verse 13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They received not the promises on earth; but were persuaded of them, and received them in heaven. This passage proves that the apostle includes the general promises of the revelation of God, as it was made at that time. Nor indeed is there that difference between special and general promises which some might suppose. Each of them rests on the same authority; each was attested by miracles; and the general are special in their interest and application.

This is a point on which we may profitably dwell. We doubt not that the laws of Christ were made for us as individuals; nor do we doubt that our conduct as individuals pleases or displeases God; nor that we shall be judged at last personally; for "every one shall give an account of himself to God." For the same reason we are not to regard the promises as collective only, but personal; made to me in the infinite goodness of God. Some promises, indeed, are collective: but the largest class are so particular, that I might take the words of apostles, and go to each individual, and say, "To *you* is the word of this salvation sent."

These observations will aid us in the inquiry, whether there are not promises thus made to us as individuals which we have not "obtained."

1. The great promise of justification by faith in Christ is made to you.

Justification is that act of God by which he remits all past sin, receiving the sinner into his favour, and treating him as a just or a

righteous man. This blessing is promised to every one that believeth. The inquiry then is, Have I Scriptural evidence to conclude that this has taken place as to me? Is the sense of guilt removed? Have I trust in God as God reconciled? Does the Spirit of adoption dwell in me, crying, Abba, Father? Do I love him, knowing that he hath loved me, and given himself for me? And do all the fruits follow,—"love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance?" Since St. Paul especially joins inseparably "death to sin" with a state of justification, is "the old man crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin?" "How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

2. We have the promise of a constant supply of spiritual life.

Christ came that we "might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly." He has promised that the Holy Spirit shall be in the heart of the believer "as a well of water springing up into eternal life;" and in regard to himself he has said, "He that eateth me shall live by me." The effect of all this is spiritual vigour, and a relish in the application of our minds to Divine things. With this are also connected holy thoughts, lively affections, cheerful and persevering service. This is the import of these promises of living influence made to you. Have you, through your faith, "obtained" them?

3. A third class of promises relate to our deliverance from the worldly spirit.

That spirit is manifested by excessive care as to the things of this life; and all the promises, that God will be a Father to us, will add to spiritual blessings all necessary things of a temporal nature, will watch over us and care for us by his daily providence, although they do not imply our exemption from troubles, yet make such engagements as are designed to bring us into a thankful acquiescence with our lot in life.

The worldly spirit is seen by excessive love of the creature; and all the promises, that God will by his manifested presence be better to us than the creature, are intended to remove this love of earth.

Now, have we "obtained" these promises? Do we so see the hand of God in the events of life, as to rest from anxiety? so enjoy inward and sweet communion with God, as to rest in him with entire and supreme satisfaction?

4. A fourth class of promises relate to victory over temptation.

This is an important class. We must conquer that which conquered Adam; and yet in ourselves we possess no such power as he possessed. We must detect the deceitfulness of sin, and resist when the temptation works on that within us which is most ready to receive its impressions. Satan has his wiles of deceit, and he possesses great power and restless activity. Yet there are promises that we shall be kept from evil. The Lord is "able to keep you from falling;" he will "bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" and every regenerate man is said to "keep himself," so that "the wicked one toucheth him not."—"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Now the question with every one of us ought to be, "Am I a conqueror; or am I a conquered man? Do I wear the chain, or walk in freedom? Am I

overcome by temptation, or do I preserve 'a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man?'"

5. There are promises of growth and progress in all religious habits and acts.

All the commands on this subject, to "grow in grace," and to "go on unto perfection," have in them the nature of promises. I am directed to grow; and the command implies an engagement to supply the power. We are directed also to abide in Christ, the source of fruitfulness.—The Father is glorified when we bring forth much fruit; and Christ, the true vine, communicates and maintains the life of God in the soul, by which the required fruitfulness is secured. All the apostolical prayers are promises, because they relate to God's gracious engagements. "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." "For this cause I bow my knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." It is also worthy of remark, that, in addition to the Divine commands, and the apostolical prayers, the direct spiritual promises have a fulness never to be exhausted. Every one of us ought, therefore, to inquire whether we "obtain" these promises. Do I grow in grace, so as to be completely delivered from the corruptions of my nature, and to love God with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength?

Now supposing, that, though these promises are made to you, you feel, on serious self examination, that some are not obtained at all; and that others are obtained very partially; this will lead us,

II. To investigate the cause of this sad failure.

It is faith that obtains promises. This is clearly stated in the text. If, therefore, the promises of God are not obtained by us, there is a defect in us as to faith. Let us enter into this subject with proper feeling. If the blessings contained in the promises of God are attainable, how much we lose by falling short of them! If they must be attained, as a matter of duty, how much we hazard by our neglect! In this case we "fail of the grace of God;" and on this subject the apostle exhorts us to fear, lest a promise being left us, any of us should seem to come short of it, and fall short of the heavenly Canaan by unbelief, as the Israelites in the days of Moses fell short of the land promised to their fathers.

1. Faith may be defective as wanting its Scriptural concomitants.

We are justified, and obtain all the promises, by faith alone; but saving faith, as it is well expressed in one of the homilies of the established Church, is not alone. One concomitant of true faith is a sense of danger. It credits the whole revelation of God, the threatenings as well as the promises. Here is the ground of the grand failure in many

They are not awakened. How should you have the faith which obtains the promises, when you are not sensible of your danger? Never will you obtain the promise of pardon, till you see your danger, and flee for your lives from the impending ruin.

Another concomitant of true faith is a broken spirit. Many persons have fear and remorse; but they have not that godly sorrow which worketh repentance. They are alarmed for the consequences of sin; but they are not duly sensible of the evil of sin itself. The penalty of transgression they are anxious to escape; but they are not deeply sensible of the magnitude of their guilt in having so long sinned against the God of love and mercy. There is in them no deep conviction of the desperate corruption of their nature; and hence their hearts are not "touched with the true sincerity of wo."

A sense of unworthiness is another concomitant of true faith. We can claim nothing at the hands of God's justice. Mercy, from first to last, is our only plea. This unworthiness is deeply felt, and humbly acknowledged, by those who receive the promise of pardon and salvation.

Another concomitant of true faith is strong desire after these blessings. There are in the mind of the believer, not merely a preference of these blessings to the things of earth, although that is indispensable; but restless aspirings after them; intense hungerings and thirstings after righteousness. All this is expressed by the psalmist, where he says, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

Another concomitant is persevering prayer. This is the ordinance of God's appointing as the visible expression of faith; and he will honour it. Jesus, therefore, "uttered a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Every one that thus asketh receiveth the blessings which the promises reveal, and upon which his heart is set.

Now, has our faith failed in these concomitants? If it have, it is no wonder that we have not "obtained the promises" of God, however we may have expressed our belief of those promises, and our desire to realize their fulfilment.

2. Faith may remain feeble and powerless, because we nourish it not by its proper food, the word of God.

Faith is not a blind persuasion. That is nothing but presumption. As there is "a reason for the hope that is in us," so there is a reason for faith. That reason is the word of God. Has God spoken? That is the ground of our faith. What has he spoken? That is the measure of our trust. Hence arises the necessity, not only of hearing and reading the word of God, but of so hearing and reading as to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the truth of God. By thus hearing faith comes and is nurtured.

3. We may fail in the actings of faith.

There is a wide difference between a general confidence in God, and a special trust in regard to the promises which we plead, and for the fulfilment of which we wait upon him. We may have a full persuasion that he is able to save to the uttermost; that the sacrifice and intercession of Christ are available; that the mercy of God is infinite; and that his truth can never be violated; and yet we may fail to realize the blessings of salvation in our own experience. In addition to this

general confidence, there must be an act of special trust in God for the present communication to us of those blessings which we particularly need, and which the promises of his word authorize us to expect.—The language of saving faith is, "I claim the blessing now;" and God will honour this absolute reliance upon his veracity, power, and love, by communicating to those who thus "honour" him the joys of pardon and holiness. Whereas, we may rest in this general confidence, and, after all, perish in our sins.

If, then, you fail in obtaining the promises which immediately relate to your personal salvation, let me exhort you,

1. That you cry mightily to God for a broken and contrite heart.

Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. It is his work to remove the hardness from the heart; to take away our natural levity, and indifference to our spiritual interests; and to grant that repentance which is unto life. Call upon him with earnestness and importunity, and he will give you that poverty of spirit which will prepare you for his inward kingdom, and that salutary mourning which precedes the consolations of forgiveness. Do not prescribe to him the measure of godly sorrow which is necessary in your case: leave that to him; but surrender yourselves into his hands by earnest prayer, and he will fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness.

2. That you set before you all that God has promised as designed for you. Many persons know not the extent of the salvation revealed in the Gospel, and which is attainable in this life. It is indeed a "great salvation;" comprising full and free justification, a new nature, uninterrupted communion with God, tranquillity amidst all the afflictions of life, and constant ability to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." These, and a thousand other blessings, are secured to the believer by the promises of Holy Scripture. "Arise, walk through the land in the length and breadth of it;" and remember who has said, "I will give it unto thee."

3. That, with your prayers, you stir up yourselves to the actings and exercise of faith.

Lay hold upon the promises. In order to this, let me remind you of what I said at the beginning of this discourse, that the general promises are not only as much yours, as if they had been made to you by immediate revelation, but that they are as powerfully attested as any special ones. Perhaps you say, that, if you had seen the Angel Jehovah who made promises to Abraham, and had been favoured with other sensible manifestations of God, you should fully trust in him, and claim the blessings which he has engaged to give. But do you forget, that it is the same God that speaks in his word to you, that formerly addressed the patriarchs; and that "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?" He speaks to you as individuals. He bids you believe, and live, and rejoice, and rest in him, and obtain victories over the world, and sin, and all the powers of darkness. Do you forget that you have more glorious proofs of this than any transient sensible manifestation could have been? The word which God has put into your hands, and which was written by miraculous inspiration, bids you believe. The miracles by which it was attested bid you believe. The experience of saints, and even your own, to a very great extent, bid

you believe. Above all, see what none of the patriarchs saw; see your Saviour on his cross, giving you a matchless demonstration of his love by dying to obtain for you all the blessings you now need, or ever can need for ever. There is the grand proof that the love of God to you is immense and unutterable; and the death of Christ seals the promise yours, and claims from you a trust as unlimited as the mercy which induced him to suffer in your stead.

Sermon XXV.—*The Dedication of the Temple.*

Preached at the opening of a Chapel.

"Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness," 2 Chronicles vi, 40, 41.

Though we cannot track the paths of Him whose footsteps are in the sea, nor penetrate that veil behind which the Ruler of the universe transacts his affairs, unseen by mortal eyes, yet enough is known by fact, and established by the general principles of his own word, to warrant the conclusion, that every political event to which the rise and fall of empires give birth, has an intentional or real bearing upon the interests of religion.

This is eminently true of the separation of the family of Abraham, and of the exodus from Egypt. One preserved the decaying knowledge of the true God; the other displayed his glory and supremacy by the terrible acts of his right hand. "Over all the gods of Egypt will I exalt myself." Scattering his plagues upon them who said, "Who is the Lord?" overwhelming them in the sea; marching at the head of his own Israel, in a pillar of a cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night; the earth feared before him, and the gods of the heathen were covered with shame. "Cursed," said their votaries, by a bitter experience, "are all they that put their trust in" them.

To deliver Israel, and to humble idolatry, were not, however, the only objects for which the seed of Abraham were led into the wilderness and conducted to Canaan. He had a crowning mercy in reserve for them, and that was, the establishment of his worship. A tabernacle was erected, a law was deposited in it, sacrifices were offered, priests consecrated, a way to the throne of grace was opened, and all were welcomed to bow at the footstool of God, and share his blessing.

This great privilege was fully appreciated by every pious Jew, but by none more than David. The happiness, the advantage of going up to the sanctuary, none had more fully felt than he. The highest wish that his heart could form was, that he might dwell in it for ever. His inspired genius was applied with all its fire and energy, its tenderness and pathos, to heighten its devotion by holy songs; and the project on which, with the deepest interest, he set his heart was, to erect a dwelling more worthy of God than the frail tabernacle of the wilderness,

and to leave a permanent house of prayer as his last legacy to his kingdom. "I will not give sleep," said he, "to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob."

But David was forbidden; the gift was refused from the man after God's own heart. For what reason?—"Thou hast made great wars, and shed blood abundantly; thou shalt not build me a house." O lovely character of the God we worship! not like the gods of the heathen, who revel in miseries, and quaff with horrible gust the blood of men. The wars which David waged were lawful, they were even commanded in judgment; but this was a work of so much mercy, that misery must not breathe a sigh upon God's temple, nor the hand of blood lay a stone or erect a pillar in it. "But a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest, and he shall build my house."

The chapter I have read, as the first lesson, contains Solomon's prayer at the dedication of this house, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth;" and the text comprises its concluding supplications. Nor is it inapplicable to the present occasion. You too have built a house for God, and you are assembled to present it to him. Like assembled Israel, also, you look for some token of the Divine acceptance. You feel the house is indeed solitary, crowded as it is, till God descends into his resting place. Never was prayer more honoured: "When Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house." May the same prayer, by spiritual manifestations, in like manner, be answered this day. "Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness."

The text is a prayer to God,
For the notice of his eye,
For the attention of his ear,
For the instructions of his word, and
For a holy and successful priesthood.
To each of these we will solicit your attention.

I. It is a prayer to God for the notice of his eye: "Let thine eyes be open toward this house."

This phrase in Scripture signifies approbation and acceptance; and this ought to be ever considered the great end of our actions. Poor is the applause of others, vain is the self complacency with which we may contemplate our own religious services, unless the Lord look upon us with a smile of approval. Such were the sentiments of Solomon, and such I trust are ours. We bring our work to God this day for his acceptance: "Let thine eyes be open toward this house."

If, indeed, a house were presented to God under some circumstances, we should have no warrant to expect this; for, though the greatest of all works, the noblest of all charities, yet here, as in every thing else, the motive and purpose are weighed by God, before he will fix upon it the regards of his eye.

Did you propose to merit heaven by your charity this day, the eye

of God would turn from your proud presumption. Did you open this place for a false worship, a false doctrine, could he regard it? It was not till every thing was made according to a heavenly pattern that God filled the tabernacle. Elijah did not call upon Baal when fire descended from heaven. Were you actuated by nothing more than a spirit of mere party, losing sight of the proper ends of our common Christianity, in vain would you solicit the notice of his eye. The boundless God of love never shrinks to the measure of a bigot; nor will the fire in which he descends commix with the earthly explosions of unhallowed zeal. "Christ is not divided."

But these, I know, are not your motives: your hearts have pitied the numbers of your fellow men, who, in this populous place, live without God, and die around you without hope. You spread a new tent to shelter them; you open another house of mercy to afford them refuge; you provide accommodation for those who are excluded from your other chapels; you intend here to exhibit Christ the Saviour; your object is the salvation of men. Your motives are approved. It was an argument used with success to induce Jesus to work a miracle in behalf of a man of eminence, "He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." You love his cause, and have built a house where that cause may be pleaded. Present it then with humble confidence to His notice whose glory you have sought, and say, "Now, O Lord, let thine eyes be open upon this place."

This, however, was not all that Solomon prayed for; nor is it all on which we ought to fix our hearts this day. He prays for the constant notice of his eye, "day and night;" verse 20; his kind approval, not only of the act of dedication, but of its stated and constant services. Such is the object of this day, to turn the approving eye of God on this place, and to fix it there: but this great blessing will not be granted unconditionally; and what will be required of you, it is my duty to point out.

That you may worship him under his approving eye,

1. Your worship must be spiritual.

Never did he accept the worship of the lip only. The splendid ceremonial even of Jewish worship could not be substituted for the homage of the heart; and much less can it be thus substituted under that dispensation which is eminently the dispensation of the Spirit. God is a Spirit. You pray that his eye may be turned upon the heart of every worshipper; and into that it pierces, in search of such sentiments and principles as he has a right to demand. He permits you to approach, but it is the heart for which he calls; not your bodies only, but your souls; not half the man, but the whole; not the skin of the sacrifices, but the body, the inward parts; the attentive ear, the feeling heart, the sigh of penitence, the whole love of your affections.

2. To fix the approving eye, your worship must be that of faith.

Such was the worship of Solomon: he offered bloody sacrifices, symbols of faith in Messiah. None enters here but by blood; "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Your hands must present the remembered sacrifice of Jesus; your faith must rely upon it. It is to that worship only that his eye has respect; it is that name only which attracts the notice of his ear.

3. To meet the approving eye of God, whenever you appear here, you must come with purity.

Not indeed that the prayer of a polluted sinner will not be heard; not that though the filthiness of sin may remain in your skirts, you shall be excluded; but that sin must be repented of, and removed.—The temple of Solomon had its immense laver. The laver of regeneration is here: wash and be clean; put off your shoes from your feet; cleanse yourselves from earthly defilements; for the place on which you stand is holy. God's eye is here; and never forget, and write it deeply on your memory, it is the standing rule of God's conduct as to his worshippers, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, thou wilt not hear my prayer."

Thus is your service acceptable, and God will regard you for good. Ever, O God, may thine eye be upon this place; and ever may it behold such worshippers!

II. The text contains a prayer to God for the attention of his ear: "Let thine ear be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place."

The temple was designated, by way of eminence, "the house of prayer:" and this is the character of every true place of worship; it is the place "where prayer is wont to be made."

It is true, we have a place of prayer in our closets. We have one in our families; and happy is he who delights to retire from the world to hold private fellowship with his God; and blessed is that family whose daily devotions present them to the notice and care of the God of the families of the whole earth. "The voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

But it is not to be forgotten, that the same authority which has instituted the duties of the closet and the family has established also the obligation of public and social worship: "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." In truth every other mode of worship, however important, is inferior to this. Private prayer is designed principally for personal purposes; family worship for a blessing upon our relations, circumstances, and pursuits. Public worship includes these and more. Large and general intercession is reserved for our public assemblies; and for this reason, that God will be sought publicly, that it may be publicly acknowledged that every good gift is from above. "If two or three of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

Here, then, we see another part of the solemn and important service of this day,—to intreat God that his ears may be attent to the prayer that is made in this place. But what prayers will be made here? Personal prayers will be made here: "and when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house, then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive." Prayers for ministers will be made here: you will not refuse them this, when so much depends upon it. You will hold up their hands, and pray the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel into their hearts and lips. Prayers for the inhabitants of this town will be made here. Let no man, as he passes by this or other places of worship, actuated by the spirit of party and intolerance, envy its erection: he is prayed for here; the spiritual and temporal, and eternal interests of the town are

laid before God. Prayers for our beloved country will be offered here; for in its peace we shall have peace; and for this we shall pray. What heart that assembles here will not join with us in saying, "Peace be within her walls, prosperity within her palaces, for my brethren and companions' sakes, I will say, Peace be within thee." "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," O Britain, "let my right hand forget its cunning." Land of light, may thy glory brighten! Land of liberty, may thy freedom be immortal! Land of charity, may thy hand never lack what thou hast a heart to give! May thy character be as the spotless sun thy soil never be trodden by hostile foot. May wasting and destruction be averted from thy borders! May thy fields yield their increase. Let there be no complaining in thy streets! May God, even thy own God, bless thee! But, should God be angry with us for our sins; should the heavens give no rain, the pestilence which walks in darkness smite us; should we be put to flight before some insulting foe; should Britons groan in the captivity of some foreign land; yet then we have one resource,—we will hasten to our houses of prayer; we will stand between the living and the dead; we will say, "Be not angry against us for ever; draw not out thy wrath to all generations." Then, O God, remember the prayers we offer this day; and when thy grace is sought for our country in this place, "hear thou in heaven, and when thou hearest, forgive," and save thy people.

But prayer will be offered for the extension of Christ's kingdom. Even under the Jewish restricted dispensation the conversion of the heathen was not overlooked. God wrought terrible miracles, that the fame of them might spread, and all nations know him to be the Lord. The temple was magnificently built, and filled with glory, that men might be attracted to come from far countries; verse 32; and for these strangers Solomon affectingly prays. The case is now different: we do not call them to come to us, to hear the Gospel, but we send it to them; the principle, however, is the same benevolent desire for their conversion. Yes, in this place you will not forget the strangers in far countries. They cannot worship with you in this house; but, by the influence of the Gospel you have sent them, they are building houses of prayer for themselves. Many of them now observe your Sabbaths, and call upon the name of the Lord, both their Lord and ours. You will pray for them here: you now pray for them, and say with Solomon, "Hear thou from heaven, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel."

III. The prayer in the text is offered for the instructions of his word: "Arise thou, and the ark of thy strength."

The temple was built, and dedicated; but with all its costly furniture, one thing was wanting to constitute it truly a temple,—the ark of God We consider this part of the text a prayer for the administration of instruction; because the ark contained the tables of the ten commandments, and a copy of the whole law, which the priests were appointed to teach. "The priest's lips were to keep knowledge;" and if they spake not according to the law and testimony, their ministry was disowned, and there was "no light in them."

In accordance with this view, we pray this day, that the ark of God may be placed here, and rest here; that is, that the Gospel of Jesus

of which that ark was a type, may be ever preached within these walls, that your priests may keep this knowledge, and that, when you seek it from their mouths, you may not seek it in vain.

As this is of vast importance, as you have built this house in vain if the true Gospel be not preached in it, we will still farther consider the subject.

What then is the Gospel? This question will find an interesting answer on referring to its type, the ark.

The ark was a chest containing the law. Its covering was called the propitiatory or mercy seat, on which was sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on the great day of expiation. Above it were figures of cherubs; and between the cherubim was the glory of God. If this type be realized, then the pure Gospel must exhibit a perfect correspondence.

The true Gospel is law,—let not that startle you,—as much law as any dispensation of God. And a Gospel of mere faith, which makes void the law, and insists not on personal holiness, is not the Gospel of the grace of God. The Gospel, like the ark, presents law in connection with grace; an atonement, a sprinkled mercy seat, justification of the guilty violaters of law by faith. A Gospel, therefore, of morals, and duties, and ceremonies, without a sacrifice, faith, and pardon, is not the Gospel prefigured by the ark.

The cherubim at the extremities of the mercy seat represented invisible powers, angels, and, by consequence, a spiritual world and immortality. To this the Gospel answers. Angels are God's ministers; and the Gospel brings us into connection with them at death, and associates us with their immortality. A system which converts the soul into matter, sends the soul asleep till the resurrection, and casts a shade of earthly opaqueness upon the glories of immortality, is not our Gospel.

But, above all, was the glory of God; that was seen in constant connection with the ark, and finely represents the grand peculiarity of Christianity, that God is ever with his truth. This, indeed, is one of the most impressive representations presented by the ark; the presence of God was with it. It is that which gives the Gospel all its efficacy, as it was that which made the ark "the ark of his strength." The power of that was not in its wooden chest, and its stone; no, nor in its mercy seat, overlaid with gold, and its carved cherubim: it was not before these that Jordan rolled back its waves, when the priests who bore the ark only dipped their feet into its waters; not before these that the walls of Jericho fell, Dagon fell and was broken, the Philistines were smitten, and God's enemies discomfited; but it was before the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel: God arose, and his enemies were scattered. Thus it is not the system itself, but the accompanying power of God, which gives its triumph to the Gospel; and with that is the Gospel "the ark of his strength." Does not your experience testify this? Have you not felt its power when God was there? Have you not felt the strength of its beaming light searching your dark and hidden hearts? the keenness of the edge of God's sword, the sharp point of God's arrow? Do you not prove its converting energy, stronger than sin; and its strong consolation and good hope through grace, consolation stronger than poverty, stronger than pain, stronger than the world, stronger than death? O priests of God, never ascend

here but bearing this ark upon your shoulders! Carry it wherever you go; and there shall be the Lord, giving testimony to the word of his grace. And O delightful spectacle, we see it carried on the shoulders of our brethren in distant lands! They go up to conquer the land of the Canaanites and Philistines of our day; they penetrate with it into the empires of idolatry and superstition; and the Lord is among them as in the holy place. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth;" the walls of Jericho fall: from Jericho they go to Ai, and from Ai to Makkedah; from conquering to conquer. Satan trembles on his seat, and the world is bowing before the ark of God.

Is it necessary, then, with these views, to engage your hearts to pray this day, that the ark of God may remain among you? Deep, indeed, is the present interest you have in the prayer; you and your children, and children's children, are all interested in it.

Never, O God, may we lose thy holy Gospel! We will follow it through the wilderness, our cloud by day, our fire by night; fearless, with that in view, we will rush into the Jordan of death; it shall guide us into our Canaan; and we will rest for ever under its shadow, the cloud of thy protecting love, on the hill of Zion, before the God of gods.

IV. A prayer for a holy and successful priesthood: "Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness."

Here is an allusion to the garments of the priests, which were white, as emblems of purity. It was not enough that a man was invested with the priestly office. His mind was to resemble the office which he sustained. The teachers of the law were to be examples of all that the law enjoined.

Here, then, is another object of our solemn requests this day. We have prayed that the house may be under God's approving eye; we have solicited the attention of his ears to our prayers; we have asked the continuance of a holy Gospel; and we now pray that it may ever possess a holy and successful ministry.

"Clothed with salvation" is a parallel phrase to being "clothed with righteousness:" and the meaning is, that righteousness should be the habit of the soul; that your ministers should have personal experience of the salvation they preach to others. This, so far from being a dispensable qualification, is one of the utmost importance. Three considerations will prove to you, that the Gospel cannot be fully administered, except by men having personal experience of its truth and power.

1. No minister can fully know the truth but by experience, and therefore cannot teach it.

Much of Christianity, as a system of doctrines and duties, may be learned as a mere science; but there are mysteries in it which nothing but the key of experience can unlock. What can be known of genuine repentance, the workings of a penitent soul, by him who never felt them? To the simple question, "What must I do to be saved?" he can give no answer. The doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, and of walking with God, the natural man receiveth not, and they are foolishness to him.

2. No minister can conduct his office with a proper feeling without experience, and that experience constant.

Proper feeling arises from two sources: fear and love. "Knowing

the terror of the Lord," having a serious persuasion of eternal realities, "we persuade men." The love of Christ constraineth us. But where that is wanting, there is no holy constraint, to labour, watch, pray, and plead for the salvation of souls. The soul of holy eloquence is gone; all the secret feeling by which heart seizes heart. Or if the preacher who is destitute of Divine love ever moves his hearers, it is through the passions or the imagination, and not through the conscience. His preaching may excite such transient emotions as poetry would pro duce; but the power is not the inspiration of living truth.

3. Success is promised to no unconverted man: "Lo, I am with you." But whom? Those who had left all and followed him, and who had received Jesus and his Spirit.

Such, then, is the importance of the prayer, that you must have barren ordinances, or faithful ministers. But when thus "clothed with salvation" by personal experience, another event will follow; they will be "clothed with salvation" in the sense of success. Preaching from such feelings, and aided by your prayers, they will be adorned with the honourable trophies of the salvation of others. They will save themselves and save you; and they will wear you as their crown of rejoicing, their diadem of glory, and their robe of beauty, in the day of the Lord. For this, also, we pray. Lord of the harvest, send forth thine own labourers. Send by whom thou wilt send; but send thou alone. Clothe the priests who shall here minister with salvation, and then thy saints will rejoice in thy goodness.

This is the close of the whole; the answer of all these prayers must have this result; the saints will rejoice in the goodness of God. Can it be otherwise? Consider the case supposed, and which we pray may be realized: a house, on which the approving eye of God shall rest night and day; where his ear bows attentive to every prayer; where the mysteries of godliness are developed and impressed; where a faithful, warning, and powerful ministry accomplishes the travail of the soul of Christ; where the wicked are reclaimed, souls saved from death, pardons dispensed, and the varied wants of human weakness supplied; where God is in the fulness of his grace, and the activity of operation. Here the saints must rejoice.

In this case you are invited to no tiresome ceremonial, no dull and drowsy devotions, no cold and powerless harangues. You will rejoice in goodness, in the felt presence of God, in the abundance of spiritual blessings. Here your minds will be enlightened, your sorrows soothed, your holy affections quickened. This will be your house of God, and your gate of heaven. How awful, how gracious, this place! One of you will say to another, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord." Your spirits will faint for the courts of the house of God. Welcome will be the dawning light of your Sabbaths; beauteous the feet, and joyful the sound of the footsteps, of those who publish to you glad tidings of peace. By families you will come up to Zion; your children shall lift up infant hands in the dwelling of Him who was once a child.—Youth shall give its enlivening fire to the service; trembling age itself will still seek thy dwellings, O God of Jacob, and cast its load of infirmities on thy compassion;

> "Sigh thy blest name, then soar away,
> And ask an angel's lyre."

On your dying pillows the memory of those happy hours you shall have spent beneath his shadow will fall upon you like the refreshing dew; and when you would anticipate the felicities of the blessed, and form some idea of your longed-for heaven, you will realize it by recalling the feelings of those days which here you will prove each to be better than a thousand, and where your full hearts have said, "I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

We have been putting up this day one of the boldest petitions; we have been praying that the eye of God may be upon us.

The prayer is answered. He sees and searches every heart. All things, whether naked or open, are under the special observance of Him with whom we have to do. What a solemn impression ought this to make on every heart! Eye of God, seest thou a mind

"Naked, and dark, and void of thee?"

O enlighten and enrich it! Are the hearts thou now searchest cold and languid? O warm and enliven them! Are we polluted? Put away our pollution from before thy sight. Dost thou, who readest thought, behold a rising desire, a heart swelling with grief for having grieved its God, and never can itself forgive? Give some assurance of thy favour. O pardon, and witness thou art ours! And if, in the depth of our humility, we lament our faithlessness and omissions; if now we lament after God, pant for a full Divine conformity to thee, now give thyself fully unto us; and all our powers, under the glory and weight of thy presence, shall say, "It is the Lord." Yes; we ask of thee some special token of thy presence and favour, a glorious proof that thou hast accepted the work of our hands. We know, every one of us, our own sore and our own grief; and we come to thee, who art even now asking, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request?" Lord, we ask —is it too much to ask? Has not thy condescension on former occasions emboldened us to ask?—thy special presence. Now, therefore, O Lord God, arise thou, and the ark of thy strength; fill this house with thy glory, shake the temple of our redeemed spirits, and be an everlasting resident there. We prepare our hearts for thee; we cast away our sins to make thee room; thy priests wait to be clothed with salvation; thy people, to rejoice in thy goodness; "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come;" all our hearts say, "Come;" our guilt, our weakness, our nothingness, have all a voice,—all say, "Come;" and wilt not thou also say, "Lo, I come quickly?" Even so, come, come, Lord Jesus!

We solicit a token of your love. Give as feeling that the eye of God is upon you.

Sermon XXVI.—*The Destruction of Idolatry.*

"Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens," Jeremiah x, 11.

The great reason for missionary efforts is the moral destitution of the world. If it be not ignorant, it does not need our instruction; if it be not in danger, it does not need the message of salvation. The state of the world should therefore be well understood; and our inquiries ought to be the more serious, because it has been wilfully misrepresented by infidels, and very partially reported by others, who have not been sufficiently attentive to the subject, and have not viewed it with a Christian eye. Till Dr. Buchanan and others published their works, the moral state of India was not understood; and some persons have mistaken the state of the heathen generally from the influence of their theological theories.

Our object shall therefore be to inquire into the state of the heathen world; to consider where its remedy lies; and how far it lies with us to apply it.

I. There are several ways of approaching this subject, which may all lead to true, though painful, results. That which I prefer is, to consider the necessary and uniform effects of idolatry, of the worship of "the gods who have not made the heavens and the earth;" and if the fact is granted, which I believe not to be questioned, that this has been the universal practice of pagans, I ask no other principle to enable me to spread before you a scene of dark and pitiable wretchedness, which must excite our commiseration. The text implies the evil of idolatry, and it anticipates with triumph its overthrow.

To investigate the subject of idolatry, we must be careful on what principles we proceed.

Philosophical principles will serve little here. It may be assumed, that the doctrines of our religion are too abstract and refined; that, in the process of mental growth in nations, as the powers are developed by science, literature, and the arts, outward symbols of spiritual things are adopted to aid mental conception; and that, as the process is continued, better conceptions will follow.

Thus, in substance, have men philosophized on the acknowledged fact,—a fact, certainly, which cannot but awaken intellectual curiosity. But there is, in these theories, one falsehood assumed, and one great truth omitted.

It is assumed, that nations in every case are to be contemplated in an ascending process from ignorance and barbarism, to science and cultivation. This is not true of all; for ancient nations, among whom idolatry first arose, had knowledge, and even the patriarchal religion. If it were true, it would not serve the argument; for, in many instances, as knowledge and civilization increased, there was increase of idolatry.

The truths omitted in this philosophical consideration of idolatry are such as philosophy can take no cognizance of, and are known only to religion. This shows that it is by the light of religion only that the

subject can be accurately viewed. By that we are taught that the love of vice produces hatred to truth; and from this predisposition to error the superstitions of nations are to be traced. Religion furnishes us with another principle,—that of judicial dereliction. There is a giving up to blindness. Awful as the doctrine is, it is that of the Bible.—"Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to vile affections. They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." So Saul, when he had sinned beyond the patience of his God, was answered neither by urim and thummim, nor by priest; and he went forth to consult the witch of Endor. Idolatry, thus viewed, conducts us to a result most important in every inquiry, as to the state of the pagan world. If it were, as philosophy teaches, the result of infantine and immature intellectual power, it would be a matter of necessity, and unavoidable. If, as religion teaches, it is the effect of a vicious heart, it is a voluntary practice.

The subject, however, must be more fully developed. Idolatry is an awful subject; and, where it exists, it presents man in the condition of most affecting destitution; for,

1. Where there is idolatry there is no God.

It is true, that, among the most refined of the inhabitants of many idolatrous nations, we find that a supreme God is not unknown; and among others there are distinct ideas of him, utterly unconnected with outward adoration or practical effect. Among the temples to the "lords many" of India, there is not one to this God. Among savage idolaters, no trace of the knowledge and worship of the true God is generally found.

But let us not coldly come to this conclusion. Think what it is to be without God in the world. With you that great idea fills and elevates the thoughts; you feel your helplessness, and fly to him; you are in distress, and look up to heaven, and behold a compassionate Father, and a boundless futurity before you. It would appal, it would fill with anxiety; but you lean every care on Him who is from everlasting to everlasting God. What is invaluable to you, is so to them. Your gain by all this revelation marks the extent of their loss. All the wants you feel, and which God only can supply, they feel too. You take your wants to God; they take theirs to an idol; and an idol is nothing. You go to the fountain of living water; they, to broken cisterns. They apply parched lips to an empty vessel; they are hungry, and they dream they eat; they awake, and are not satisfied.

2. Where there is idolatry, there are no morals.

The true foundation of morals is the will of God. That will is holy, because he is holy; and a holy God being known, his will is known also to be such. There is no knowledge of morals but where there is a knowledge of God; and there is no sanction of them. It is true, that in countries where God is known we may find morals without immediate reference to God and his will. The conduct may be correct out of regard to public opinion and character; but this public opinion as to morals is created by the acknowledged fact, that there is a God that hateth iniquity; and this acknowledgment is produced by the knowledge of his will. It is this which gives character and reputation to moral purity; this that fixes the standard of judgment, and places fear on the side of virtue.

From idolatry no morality can issue, because there is no superior will in its favour. The beings who displace the holy God are not, like him, holy; and no sanction can be derived from them in favour of virtue: virtue has nothing to hope from their favour; vice, nothing to fear from their displeasure. It would, indeed, if the principles before laid down be correct, be most absurd to expect any thing but what is favourable to vice in idolatry. We have seen, on the authority of God's own word, that the very cause of making idols was the love of vicious license. The continuance of idolatrous practice in the world is to be found in the same cause. Idolatry, therefore, gratifies, and even sanctifies immorality, because it was adopted for this purpose. We see, then, how inconsistent good morals must be with idolatry; the same fountain cannot send forth the sweet and the bitter stream: idolatry cannot encourage vice, and check it; it cannot make vice, as it often does, a part of religion, and then turn the thunders of religion against it. And this agrees with the fact: of all ancient and modern states it may equally be affirmed, they have polluted themselves with idols. Some crimes the interests of society have necessarily marked and prohibited; as theft, murder, adultery: but the restraint lies only in human interest; there is none in religion: for all these worst vices there is the example of some god. And can men be better than the gods they worship?

Behold, then, another note of the state of the pagan world. Vice meets no check from conscience, none from fear, none from a superior Being watching every act of man, and registering it for judgment. To be like the "gods who have not made the heavens and the earth," is to be unfit for the society of men. The worshippers of idols "are filled with all unrighteousness." This is the language of inspiration and of history.

3. Where there is idolatry there is a fatal mistake on the subject of religion.

True religion, indeed, there is none, nor indeed can be. Idolatry and superstition are not, therefore, as they have sometimes been represented, only different means of accomplishing the same end, giving men the control and benefits of religion, though by a different process. This, I fear, has been a too common notion: the same principles of piety have been supposed to be expressed by the worship of God and of idols; and he who has returned from an idol temple has been regarded as bearing away with him to his home and to his business, a conscience as satisfied, a spirit as refreshed and comforted, as he who departs from beholding the power and glory of God in the sanctuary. O when shall we reason on these subjects as exactly and carefully as upon others? Thinking so poor and pitiable, and often among men not generally regardless of God and his truth, might induce one to suppose, that, in order to prevent right feeling, and to paralyze exertion, the god of this world, anxious to keep his goods in peace, himself had, unconsciously to them, blinded their eyes to those facts and deductions which, on any other subject, would have been most obvious to them. What, then, is religion? If it be the worship of beings, either Divine, or supposed to be so, by the observance of outward ceremonies, we grant that idolatry is even more fruitful of it than any thing beside; and our wisdom would, in this case, be, to fill our streets with images,

and to exchange one God for many. But if by it is to be understood any thing which controls and engages the spirit, and regulates and sanctifies the life, then the very ceremonies and forms of religion in the pagan are themselves not arguments of religious feeling, but of the absence of it. Even in Judaism and Christianity, in ages and among people disposed to multiply ordinances and rites beyond the prescribed number, the consequence has been the total loss of a religion, spiritual and holy. These rites have all been substitutes for the spirit and practice of piety. The character of God has been debased: he has been thought capable of receiving from men sacrifice instead of obedience; his worshippers have laid him under obligations to grant his favours, and have taken the liberty, therefore, to indulge their passions and their sins. If this has been the case where the great truths of religion and its reproving records have been still before the eye, what else but such a consequence must follow to a greater extent where the truth itself has been put into darkness, and the record blotted out? Remember, then, what religion is; that it is a control exerted upon a vicious heart, and upon a vicious life: if it is not this, it is nothing. But what corrective control can be expected except that which results from the presence of a God of purity, of one who hateth iniquity, and who will everlastingly punish it? If, indeed, the imaginary beings who have usurped his place were arrayed in attributes equally pure and equally terrible to sinners, there might be some pretence for seeking a possible connection between idolatry and religion; but we know that this is not so. "The gods who have not made the heavens and the earth" have no such attributes. They are the personifications, not of light, but of darkness; not of good, but of evil; not of benevolence but of malignity; "and they that make them are like unto them cursed is every one that trusteth in them." Where there is idolatry therefore, there can be no religion; for there is no God whose presence can restrain the spirit from evil, and whose influence can renew it in righteousness.

4. Idolatry is inconsistent with religious comfort.

I am not addressing myself to those who know of no pleasures but those of earth. To those I trust I speak, who know that whatever pleasure may result from outward enjoyments,—from taste or intellect,—there are pleasures deeper and richer than them all; pleasures of religious contemplation; pleasures which result from knowing that a true propitiation is provided for our offences, a refuge from deserved wrath; pleasures of intercourse with God, trust in him, the exercise of the benevolent affections, and the hope of future felicity. Such are the comforts which our religion affords. But can they be furnished by an idolatrous system? It were easy to show, that not a pleasure of this kind is opened there; that neither those streams, nor any like them, fresh and flowing, have their founts in the fanes where God is deposed, and an idol deity assumes his place. This, however, would lead me into too wide a field; and it is enough to show how unfavourable to the comfort of the spirit is polytheism, that it takes away from man every object of assured trust, and annihilates at once the doctrine of Providence. I can scarcely fix upon a point which displays more affectingly the real wretchedness of that world of idolaters you are this day called upon to relieve. On this subject I may boldly appeal to you; for it is one

that goes directly to your feelings. Tell us, if in this world of change and uncertainty you had no knowledge of one superintending mind, who leaves nothing to chance, but rules every thing according to the counsel of his own will, what would be the state of your feelings? How unblessed would be your blessings, could you not trace them to a daily Giver in heaven! How comfortless would you be in trouble, had you no compassionate God to whom you could tell your care! no promise, that "as thy days so shall thy strength be!" no assurance that life is a discipline to improve the character and prepare the spirit for a better existence! no acquaintance with the doctrine,—at which care, with all her racks and tortures, flies away,—that all things "work together for good to them that love God!" I need not dwell upon the change which would be produced in your feelings; I need not describe you then as orphans without a parent, as friendless sufferers in a world of wo, as travellers without a guide, as driven among beating billows, without a beacon on the shore or a pilot in the vessel: you can realize the sad, the dark, the agitated feeling. What you would be, idolaters are. For polytheism admits no Providence. It peoples heaven with gods who war with each other, and each other's worshippers: there is no superintending mind in that heaven, no common plan, no regular discipline; and there can be no trust. Nor is this mere deduction; it is fact. We need nothing more to prove it than the universal practice of worshipping demons,—powers which delight in evil, and in inflicting it. If idolaters have any trust in a benevolent Providence, why do they fear these images and forms of gloom and horror? Or, why do they not, if they believe the superior reign of paternal Goodness, intercede with him to be their protector? With them the world is abandoned to worse than chance,—to the reign of wicked spirits. It is not even in their more benevolent deities that they have any trust. They bring their offerings to devils, to propitiate their anger by various sacrifices; and they get relief from one, only to fear the impending vengeance of another. O state of pitiable wretchedness! Compare it, Christians, with your own. You are afflicted, but you know that the stroke of the rod is directed by a Father's hand. They are afflicted, and a demon tyrant starts up in their imaginations with all his attributes of malice and blood. The first thought which affliction suggests to you, is the thought of God; the first thought it suggests to them, is the thought of a demon.

5. Where there is idolatry, there is no hope.

"Without God, and without hope," is the declaration of Scripture. On this subject I would not be misunderstood. It is easy to deal out sweeping assertions on either side. We ought to fear, on such a subject, lest we theorized too much. There is a danger of speaking of God the thing which is not right. We may impugn his purity on the one hand, his equity on the other. The guide is Scripture, the light which shines in this and every other dark place and difficulty.

The proposition I have just laid down must not be misunderstood. It is not that where there is not the light of the Gospel, there is no hope; but where there is idolatry, there is no hope. It is not that no heathen can be saved, but that no idolater has hope of salvation; and on this the evidence of Scripture is abundant. No idolater can enter the kingdom of God. The ground of this distinction is, that, for aught

we know, there may be heathens, that is, persons without revelation, who are not idolaters. They must be few indeed; for where have they been found? If such a people exist, they are not in the condemnation. "In every nation, he who feareth God," and not an idol, "and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."

The fact, the unquestioned fact, that the vast majority are idolaters, is sufficiently affecting; we need go no farther. "The world lieth in wickedness."

But how is the guilt of idolatry proved? And here too the Scripture affords us its light; and we need only refer to the early part of the Epistle to the Romans. The object of the apostle there is to prove all Jews and Gentiles under sin, and thereby to show the necessity of the sacrifice of Christ. And it is observable that he uses but one argument to prove the fact as to both. He does not say that the Gentiles are guilty because they had not the law, and the Jews because having it they violated it. This would have been to assume two different principles. He lays it down, that the Jews had *the* law, the Gentiles *a* law. The Jews were guilty because they broke their law, the Gentiles because they broke theirs. Nor is the case made less clear as to the Gentiles than the Jews. As certainly as the Jewish law was holy, just, and good, so was the Gentile law. It was transmitted from the patriarchs, though inferior in light; and however darkened, it was never extinguished. They "are a law," in all ages, "to themselves." The guilt of idolaters is then obvious: their conduct is in opposition to law, to God's testimony in his works; they are, therefore, without excuse. It is this which extinguishes hope as to idolaters, and surrounds us, whenever we meet on such occasions, with the millions of our fellow men living without God, and dying without hope.

This being the state of our world, let us inquire,

II. In what its remedy lies.

We see sufficient to need a remedy; and were there none, nothing would present so melancholy a picture as earth. We are not, however, to despair. For though we know not the future, there is One who knows the end from the beginning; and He hath written on the page of his own book the encouraging passage which furnishes our text: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

As the world has not been agreed as to the means by which this great result is to be accomplished, an inquiry, as minute as our limits will allow, may not be improper.

Let us recollect, then, what has been proved,—the awful destitution of the world; but its great and pressing wants, and those indeed from which every other results, are its religious wants. Those wants, in the nature of the thing, nothing but religion can supply; and it follows, therefore, that whatever is done for the nations whose state we this day lament, must fall far short of meeting the case unless we can give them a true and influential religion.

That we may feel this the more strongly, let us consider the means which human wisdom, resting only upon human resources, has proposed to adopt in order to raise the condition of the barbarous or semi-civilized pagan nations of the earth.

Hope has rested,

1. On forms of government.

As these improve, and the principles of right and power are better understood, the moral and civil condition of nations is expected to advance.

We do not undervalue good forms of government. They are an institution of God, and may either greatly favour or greatly frustrate the happiness and improvement of men. Happy the people whose inheritance is a paternal and righteous government. Let such a people acknowledge the mercy, and be careful to preserve and transmit it.

It is a gross fallacy to expect every thing from mere changes of government. This is, in no common degree, the fault and passion of the age in which we have lived. Look at a neighbouring state; the last thirty years has seen her run through all the forms of government known among men, and yet forgetful of God. Look at another state, that of Spain. She was stimulated to arms in defence of her rights, breathed a spirit of lofty patriotism, the public mind was in a state of great excitement, and full of noble conceptions, yet she has settled into her former state of darkness and imbecility. The seeds of morals and of liberty were thrown into the earth, but there was not a soil to give them root. Europe in her different states, and under every form of government, where other circumstances are absent, and nothing but human power is at work, presents the same general aspect. The hope from revolutions which many have indulged, however innocent, has been futile. The thunderbolt ploughed the earth; but there was barrenness still, because no seed was thrown into the furrow. There was the earthquake and the fire, but the Lord was not there, in the still small voice of evangelical truth.

There must be moral preparation. Permanent forms of government are but the expressed public will; and if they give a character to the public, they receive theirs from the public. The best forms are vain, where public virtue is wanting; public virtue is the sum of private virtue; and that is the product only of a true and efficient religion. Rear, then, the wisest form of polity in a nation without God; yet the mass cannot be stirred by it: it is moveless till it hears a higher voice, and feels a more potent energy.

But good government supposes laws; and,

2. From laws the effect has been hoped.

Consider then the operation of laws without religion. Allow that you introduce principles of right and wrong between men, restrain violence, correct fraud, establish order. Suppose all this to be done: can the institutions of law reach the thought? Can the security of law give peace to the conscience? Can human judicature absolve from guilt? Can statutes awaken the benevolent affections, and give a spiritual mind? Still, then, you leave men without what they most want: for after all that law can do, they may be without God and without hope. But it cannot do even this without the aid of religion. A belief in God, and in a future state of reward, is the foundation of oaths, as oaths are the foundation of law; for it is an oath which ends the strife, and leads to legal decision. Idolatry does not furnish this; and therefore the perjury committed without hesitation has been found to interrupt and render nugatory our own jurisprudence, excellent as it is,

when applied in our foreign possessions among pagans. I appeal to your judgment, what would society be had we no other morals than laws can give us? Numberless are the evils which enter into the intercourse of life, and would render it most wretched, which no law can restrain, or even recognize; evils, however, which are under the daily correction of religion, even when it fails to have its full, its saving, influence.

3. But these evils have been traced to ignorance; and the revival and diffusion of science have been depended upon as the means of improving the moral condition of the pagan world. This also deserves consideration.

If by the diffusion of science be meant religious sciences, or at least, religious science, all the truths which the Gospel contains, in connection with useful knowledge, that hope would not be disappointed; but we hear of this measure too often as something not only distinct in operation, but different in principle, from a careful instruction of ignorant pagans in the truths of religion; and we hesitate not to pronounce the attempt, if so disconnected, to be utterly fruitless. We have seen that the great want of the pagan world is a religious want; and a religious want can only be supplied by religion. Human science is not that supply. Render the present nations of pagans as wise as those of antiquity; yet "the world by wisdom knew not God." Science, when carried to any considerable attainments among the few who have leisure to study it, might be fatal to the grosser superstitions of idolatry; yet it would not, on that account, render them truly religious. The most learned of pagans now are materialists and atheists; and this would only increase the number; and atheism is but a poor substitute for idolatry itself. Even that enlightened few would encourage the practice of the superstitions of the country among the people at large, as they have ever done; and the reign of idolatry would sustain no diminution. With respect to the populace, all the science which can be introduced among them is what is contained in the elements of learning; and he who thinks that the inveterate habits of an idolatrous world are to be cured by the people being enabled to read and to write, and when that reading must be the books of heathenism, or, if you please, all the moral parts of the Bible, is infinitely more of an enthusiast than any missionary whose zeal has been ridiculed. He trusts in nothing when he plunges into the depths of their darkness and barbarism, but in the arm of inspiration and in the power of God; while the enthusiastic advocate for the efficiency of mere human science hopes to banish "the gods who have not made the heavens and the earth," by teaching their votaries to recite syllables, and to character letters.

There is no moral influence in science, merely as such: it may be an instrument either of good or of evil; but is in itself, and that from its very nature, indifferent. It is an instrument, however, which, if a good agent does not seize, an evil one will; and he who sends the light of knowledge, and consequently power, among the heathen, is bound to send with it that higher science, and those principles of religious fear and hope, by which only it can be employed to moral and beneficial purposes. Much as I rejoice in mission schools, I would deprecate them with all my heart, if they were not connected with the

means of instruction in the will of God, and the mercies of the Saviour.

Where, then, is the remedy? It is in the Gospel of the grace of God. There the deep and pressing want of the world is met. A God is given back to them who have lost the knowledge of him; and stands confessed before his creatures in all his majesty and all his grace. A system of morals is ushered in, pure as their Author, and commanding in all their sanctions and motives. The lovely majesty of religion is presented; not the form arrayed in the wild habiliments of superstition, agitated with demoniacal inspirations, stained with gore, and revelling in human misery; but the form of truth and love united, inviting confidence, distributing blessings, and spreading all around her an atmosphere of light, and comfort, and healing. The true Propitiation is presented, the dying Saviour, the powerful Advocate with God, the Friend of man, Jesus the Saviour; and the nations look unto him from the ends of the earth, and are saved. O glorious visitation! and "not in word only, but in power!" Here lies the efficiency of the Gospel; this it is which distinguishes it from every thing else. All else is human, this only is Divine. Wherever there is the Gospel, there is God: "For, lo, I am with you." It is not the cloud of the Divine majesty only, but the cloud of the Divine presence. It is the voice of God, calling the prisoners of earth to come forth and show themselves; and the arm of God, throwing back the bolt of their dungeon, and leading them into liberty. It is the rain which falls upon the desert heath, and the vital spirit in it which gives it its fertilizing energy. It is the word of God; but it is also his inspiration, the breathing of his Holy Spirit; like the gales of spring, not violent, not rushing, but every where wafting life, and converting the wintry heath into fruitfulness and health. It is the mighty chariot of salvation, Messiah's moving throne, instinct with life, every sweeping wheel full of eyes and full of energy. It moves with resistless velocity; before it fly "the gods," the vain idols, "who have not made the heavens and the earth," and yet have usurped the honours of God: affrighted as the lambs at the sound of mighty thunderings, they fly before, while, behind, it leaves in its progress a train of light and blessing ample as the earth, and welcome as the day spring to them who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. The Gospel, then, gives the appointed remedy.

We are,

III. To consider how far it lies with us to apply it.

And here I think it will not be difficult to show, both that it is laid upon us to contribute with all our power to the moral improvement of the world; and that Christian missions are the means appointed for this purpose, which have the authentication of Divine authority.

1. In the first place they unquestionably accord with the standing rule of the Divine government, to help man by man.

This rule is universal. We see children dependent on parents, man on man; society is a system of mutual dependence; a large portion of it is poor and wretched; and the poor are relieved, and the wretched comforted, by man. Is religion, then, an exception? Is this altogether a matter between man and his Saviour, without the intervention of human agency? We know it is not. The establishment of the ministry proves this; the assistance which all Christians render to

each other, and to the world around them, proves this. If, then, the world immediately around us is made dependent upon us for instruction, reproof, and help, where is the authority for supposing that the more distant parts do not fall under the same rule? There is none; the human race is one family. In the politics of earth, rivers, mountains, seas, make distinctions; but in the politics of heaven they make none. "God hath made of one blood all nations;" and he has authorized the ignorance and need of one part of the world to depend upon the light and fulness of another.

2. This is still farther confirmed, by a fact of no small importance in determining our duties on this subject.

No nation, lapsed from the light and knowledge of religion, has ever regained it, while left to itself. On the contrary, we see a constant sinking; the darkening of their heaven with every age; no instance of steps traced back to the simplicity and purity of the patriarchal religion; no moral teacher raised with sufficient command to chase the darkness, and banish the superstitions of his country. They appear to have sunk into a state which the first revelations, if they could be recovered by some, would not reach. Nothing but the Gospel in its full and perfected form, with the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit, is adequate to the desperate degradation of their state. Hence it is that the apostle represents the Gospel as absolutely necessary, and the only means left. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; but how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" We must apply the remedy, or there is no hope.

3. The Christian ministry is the means divinely appointed for this purpose.

We meet the case of the pagan, not when we send the general theory of the Gospel, now and then learned by the curious among them from intercourse with Christian residents; nor by the morals of the Gospel inserted in school books, and taught their children; though both may be useful when connected with more efficient means of instruction. We do not meet the want by a supply even of the Scriptures, vastly important as that is; and none can think more of its importance than the warmest friends of missions. We only meet that want fully and effectually by the means adopted by missionary societies, by sending the Gospel, with all its apparatus of means and ordinances. Among these, the Christian ministry is one of the most important; and it was appointed by Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The apostles went every where preaching the word. Things are so constituted that that ministry is indispensable. The Scriptures are written with reference to it. The Bible is evidently a book to be explained; its history, its predictions, the reason and connection of its arguments need elucidation. Nor are its leading doctrines without that necessity. The natural man discerns them not; they are to be explained by spiritual men who have felt their power. He cannot explain even repentance toward God, whose heart has never been made penitent; he cannot lead a sinful man, conscious of his guilt, to the great Propitiation, who has not fled to that refuge himself; nor can he explain a spiritual religion whose heart is not under its

power; nor can any individual find these things out himself, except some man teach him. Missions, therefore, are the means appointed by God, and it lies with us to send them: they must go out from the Church of Christ; they must be sent forth by the prayers and liberality of saints. Deep, then, as are the wants of the world, the supply is with us. We have all; the Scriptures, the ministry, the ordinances. The instruments are prepared by God; the youth of our Churches present themselves. And what is wanting to provide a glorious, a large, an increasing supply for millions ready to perish? Nothing, I dare to affirm it, but the stated and liberal contributions of those on whom all these benefits have descended. And shall it be denied? I put it this day to your hearts and consciences; I appeal to your zeal for God, and your benevolence to man. I place you this day among the dead and the dying: you have the means of saving them; the very parings and savings of your luxuries will effect the mighty purpose. The experiment is not to be tried: see the missionary field blooming already, as a field which the Lord hath blessed. Wherever your missionaries are, they triumph. Former acts of liberality have brought twenty thousand negro slaves into the fold; spread an active leaven in West and South Africa; gladdened the villages of Ceylon with songs of praise; brought even thousands of their children to read your Scriptures, to sing your holy songs, to speak the name of your Saviour. The conclusion is, that if you help us by your contributions, thousands more must be brought to God. Will you set a petty calculation of money against this mighty interest,—against the saving of immortal souls? Will you keep a soul of man in his dungeon, in his sins, in his wretchedness, in his danger? It cannot be. It would be monstrous to think of it. You cannot balance one against the other,—the money in your pockets, against the salvation of men, and the honour of Christ. You will recruit our exhausted fund. You who hear me to-day will set an example to those who hear me not. The City-Road chapel will be an example to all the rest; and the city of London, to the whole connection. I do not often beg when I make a collection; but I will be a beggar now. I entreat it, then, for the thousands of those poor slaves who are in the bondage of sin still; for yon fisher companies of Newfoundland, whose creeks and coves are never visited but by your missionaries; for those outcasts of New South Wales, who have been transported from the region of light and holy influence, and who are far from their friends and their homes; for those Hottentots, who, under their rocks, and in their bushes, pour out the sighs of a broken spirit, and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me;" for those worshippers of demons in Ceylon, whose horrid rites fill the cocoa groves of that island with their dismal sounds; for every poor wanderer from the fold of peace and safety: for a creation groaning and travailing to be delivered. Will you deny me? Will you deny them?

You will not: your hearts and hands are pledged to this cause; and you will neither refrain from giving, nor praying, nor working, till "the gods which have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens." May God hasten the time. Amen

Sermon XXVII.—*Christian Devotedness.*

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Romans xiv, 7, 8.

This sentiment is strikingly characteristic of Christianity; and marks it with features so noble and benevolent, that, while it is a key to its design, it offers one of the greatest motives by which its discipline and influence are recommended. There was a dispute in the primitive Church respecting meats and days; for it was not to be expected that all would at once come up to the boundary of Christian liberty, or that none would go beyond it. The apostle interposes, by authority and kindness, to calm the agitation, and compose into subjection to the discipline of love, hearts which might otherwise have swollen into anger. Both parties are presumed to be equally sincere. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."

This was the judgment of charity. It was more; for, presuming upon the equal piety of the parties, their different conduct could argue no more than an imperfect judgment. In principle they must have aimed at glorifying Christ, and promoting his truth. One thought this was to be done by not offending the prejudices of the Jews in little things; another thought that a stand ought to be made against ceremonies and superstitions. Still, as Christians, the principle was the same in both. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." Party and private opinion have given way to the nobler principle of living to the Lord, and promoting his purposes among men. This, as if the apostle had said, this only is true Christianity. A Christian is a public man; he is the instrument by which public purposes of mercy to man are to be accomplished.—His life is taken up into this system of benevolent agencies; nor is even his death excluded; "for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Thus does the apostle, according to his common practice, take occasion from accidental circumstances to lay down one of the most important general principles. He does not adopt an expedient to settle a temporary dispute; but he sets up an everlasting landmark to fix the rights of Christ, and the obligations of all who profess the Christian name.

The text contains three propositions on which we shall briefly dwell.

I. No man liveth to himself.

This is not only characteristic of the true Christian, but is essentially so; for a man who lives to himself, by the sentence of the text, is not a Christian. It indicates,

1. That the Christian regards the great end of his being.

Human existence must have an object. God acts not in any thing without design. Nature is full of this. Every star, animal, plant, has some object. That this atom of the rock is in this place rather than in that, is determined by some purpose. Is man, then, exempt from this law? He who is higher than all other visible creatures in rank, who only can know the Maker of all, is capable of moral action,—capable of so much purity, so much depravity; of pleasures so rich, and wretchedness so profound; is he the sport of chance? Is he independent? Has no purpose been formed as to him? Is that purpose only the business and pleasure of this short and changeful scene? The thought is preposterous.

There is therefore an end of life, a purpose of creation and preservation; and of the still more wondrous dispensation of redemption.—It becomes us to inquire what that end is, and steadily to pursue it. The text specifies the character of a Christian; and to neglect this character, is to live only for purposes of self interest and gratification, without respect to the law and purpose of our being, and marks infallibly the man of the world. What am I? and, Why am I? are questions which we ought most seriously and frequently to put to ourselves; and he who acts according to the answer which the word of God gives to them, will live not to himself, but to the Lord.

2. No Christian man liveth to himself. This indicates the respect which he habitually has to the approbation of God. We justly admire that fine trait in the character of Enoch, that he "walked with God;" and that he had the testimony that he pleased him. He could not be satisfied with less than this; and he scaled the most arduous cliffs of toilsome virtue that he might attain it. We find a similar principle acting with all the force of a master passion in the breast of the great author of the text. "It is a small thing," said he to his enemies, "to be judged of man's judgment. Yea, I judge not mine own self;"—I am not satisfied to refer my conduct for final decision to the bar of my own mind; "but he that judgeth me is the Lord." With reference to that approving judgment he laboured and fainted not.

From this view of responsibility there arise two important objects to the Christian man. The first is, the exercise of faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. For no man can be acceptable to God but through that atonement; and the judgment will pass in favour of none but the believer. The second is, the active employment of that moral power with which his faith in Christ invests him, to maintain that inward character, and to do those works, which God in his condescending mercy does approve.

Here, again, appears the distinction between the Christian and the man who lives to himself. The man who lives to himself cultivates that principle and this passion; he does this, and he avoids the other; but what is the motive by which he is actuated? God is not in all his thoughts. If he even sometimes does good, it is not because God has commanded it. If he avoids evil, it is not because this is offensive to God. His own self is still the motive and the end. He keeps steadily in view his character, his pleasure, his honour, his interest; for he lives to himself. The Christian man has a higher motive. He sets God at his right hand. To him his heart is open; he seeks his

approbation; and to that his character and conduct are turned, as clay to the seal. Nothing is valuable to him till it is stamped with the Divine approval.

3. No Christian man "liveth to himself." This indicates the interest he feels in the cause of Christ. To live unto the Lord, by living for his cause, and to live to ourselves, is impossible. We must renounce either the one or the other; we must take it as one of the considerations to influence us when we deliberate upon choosing our religious course. Nor let any man say that he is deceived; and that this is what he never counted on. Christ deceives none. He lays it down as an indispensable rule, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself."

It is not difficult to show that regard for the cause of Christ is incompatible in many respects with living to ourselves; and that he who liveth to himself can have no respect for the honour and purposes of Christ his Saviour. Of this we are forewarned, that none might be deceived. Mark, then, the terms on which we become disciples: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny *himself*, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." This principle comes into operation as to private Christians. Christ is to be submitted to, and acknowledged; but often at the expense of that which self most regards. Self is in love with a good name; but our Saviour, addressing his disciples, says, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake." Self is in love with worldly possessions; but the Hebrew Christians "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Self is in love with domestic connections; but the Lord Jesus says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Self is in love with life; but we are reminded that if a man love his own life more than Christ, he is not worthy of him, and will be disowned. So completely is the cause of Christ at issue with self in many instances.

The same principle applies to ministers. Had St. Paul lived to himself, he would have remained a Pharisee; but his whole life is a comment on the text; slighting gain, honour, ease, and life, and cheerfully enduring want and persecution. "I endure all things," says he, "for the elect's sake; that they may obtain the salvation which is by Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

The same terms are enjoined on ministers now. They are to live for the cause of Christ; and they cannot, therefore, live to themselves. They are to be disinterested; despising labour, and neither valuing health nor life, in that service.

The extension of the work of Christ in every age goes upon the same principle. The principle of selfishness and that of usefulness are distinct and contrary. One is a point, but the centre is nothing; the other is the progressive radius, which runs out to the circumference. The one is a vortex, which swallows up all within its gorge; the other is the current stream, which gushes with an incessant activity, and spreads into distant fields, refreshing the thirsty earth, and producing richness and verdure. The principle of one is contraction; of the other, expansion. Nor is this a sluggish or inactive principle. Lively desires for the acknowledgment of Christ by men, strong and restless jealousies for his honour, tender sympathies with the moral wretchedness of our kind, deep and solemn impressions of eternal realities, and

of the danger of souls; these are the elements which feed it; and they carry Christian love beyond even the philanthropy of the natural law. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the natural law; but when his spiritual interests are concerned, Christianity goes beyond it, and disdains to take the measure from self, even when the measure might appear equitable. He is loved in some views to the utter disregard of self. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." "I endure all things for the elect;" so as even to be "in perils oft, and in deaths oft." Thus were men loved for Christ's sake by the noble army of martyrs, by the first preachers, and by the first Christians; and thus are they loved by modern missionaries. They are loved more than friends, country, health, and life itself; and if we would justify our title to the character of men who live not to themselves, but to the Lord, we must take our share of the sacrifice, and of self denial. We do not live to the Lord in our love for his cause, if we never pray for it, if we take up no cross for it, if we shrink from shame, if we are unaffected with the wastes of Zion, if we give no time, no influence, no talent, no money, to support and extend it.—Again let us be reminded that the Christian man lives not to himself, but to the Lord.

4. No Christian liveth to himself. This indicates a benevolent concern to alleviate the temporal miseries of his suffering fellow men. Spiritual charities are the most important, but they are not our duties exclusively. He who lives to the Lord will have his example in view; and in that he is seen going about doing good. With the same breath that he said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," he also said, "Take up thy bed and walk." Nor is this work of charity obstructed by the most earnest concern for the salvation of men. It is the principle sublimated higher, and in more intense excitement. There may be external charity upon lower principles, such as natural pity and softness; but there cannot be the ardent philanthropy which comprehends the soul and eternity, without taking up with it the body and time.—Concern for religious interests is not a principle which shoots beyond, by leaping over, lower concerns; but it goes beyond, without leaving any lower interest unregarded. The atmosphere of love, so to speak, reaches higher, and spreads farther; but there is no vacuum.—It presses every where; it is elastic every where; it fans all with the breath of life; and cherishes into enjoyment every object that it surrounds.

No Christian man in this respect liveth to himself. He is a steward of his Lord's goods; and is at the bed of sickness; in the house of mourning; a refuge, where he can be, from the storm; and a shadow of a rock in a weary land. He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. On all a variety of charity is demanded; and neither the one kind nor the other is to be neglected. The Christian is to be fruitful in good works; but his fruit is of various kinds. He is to be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Thus he lives not to himself, but to the Lord. He is the subjected, willing instrument of his Lord's purposes; his hand to feed; his mouth to instruct; and his strength to support. He receives, that he may give; he turns to the light, and catches its brightness. He turns to the world, and scatters there the reflected rays which he has received from a brighter sun and a higher sky.

II. No Christian man dieth to himself: he dieth to the Lord.

This is an important declaration. As a reward for not living to himself he is not suffered to die unto himself. God takes his cause into his own hands, and binds up his death with his own plans of mercy. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." It is too valuable to be left to chance. Too important is the removal of a saint to heaven, not to be designed for the correction or instruction of the world.

1. It may be in judgment to others.

It is no circumstance of trifling import when the righteous die prematurely. So many prayers as might have been offered are lost to the world; an influence is withdrawn; a light is quenched; one fewer is left to stand between the living and the dead. It may be in judgment to families who have refused admonition, and to unfaithful Churches, when a Barnabas, full of the Holy Ghost, an Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures, a Boanerges, a son of thunder, is called away. It may be a national loss, a national judgment, when some eminent man, some man of commanding influence and talent, calculated to move vast masses of mankind by his counsel and example, is removed by death, because they have not been willing to walk by his light. So John the Baptist, St. Stephen, and others, have been taken away from a people that would not be reproved and converted. Seldom have great luminaries been permitted long to continue in the Church, when the people among whom they laboured rejected their testimony. St. Paul, Martin Luther, and Mr. Wesley, all found a willing people, and were long spared to labour for their benefit: but in how many instances, at different periods, have eminent men just begun to show themselves, when their message was neglected; and their effulgence has shone forth only to attract sufficient attention to that judicial hand which hastened their setting, or drew a cloud over their glory! It was at least an official death which the silenced ministers of our own country suffered. An ungrateful people pushed them into obscurity, and were punished by years of darkness. Grief for the death of the righteous has in all ages oppressed the Church. "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth!" Properly, indeed, do we often pray that God would spare useful lives. A Christian man dies to the Lord. There is a decision of Heaven in the case.

2. It may be hastened in mercy to him.

The righteous are often taken away from the evil to come. There are cases of public danger and calamity determined, when even Noah, Daniel, and Job might plead in vain in behalf of a sinful people; and good men are removed to heaven before the scenes of wretchedness and misery are presented. After the angel had predicted fearful revolutions, and opened before the eyes of the prophet scenes of wo and trouble, he said to Daniel, "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." There may be great troubles approaching in families, there may be great and overwhelming spiritual dangers; and Christ, to whom the Christian man has lived, sees the gathering storm, and hides his beloved servant in the covert of an invisible and unperturbed state. "They are taken away from the evil to come; they enter into peace; they rest on their beds, every one walking in his uprightness." No Christian man dieth to himself; and therefore, while life is sometimes shortened,

3. It is prolonged, in many cases, in mercy to others.

It is not always that he is taken away from the evil to come He is sometimes to endure it; and his private feelings are to give place to the public good. Thus Jeremiah was doomed to weep over the destruction of his people. Bitterly did he long for death; but some public end was to be answered; and his compensation was to be in another world. St. Paul desired to depart; yet it was needful for him to continue. He must, of course, suffer. That he knew; and he knew, also, that no Christian man dieth to himself, but to the Lord.

The life of a Christian man may be prolonged also, in connection with public reasons, in mercy to himself. When men live unto the Lord, long life is a blessing; and the life of the righteous, when continued, has respect not only to others, but to themselves, and themselves in a future state. There is a higher place for which they are in preparation, than any to which they could have attained had they been cut off in early life. Their reward is heightened by every pious act; and every prayer they utter has its effect on eternity; for whatsoever a man soweth on earth, that shall he reap in eternity.

4. No Christian man dieth to himself; for his death is that by which God may be glorified.

"When thou wast young," said our Lord to Peter, "thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou art old, another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." "This," adds the evangelist, "he spake of the death by which he should glorify God." This is not peculiar to martyrs, though the words are eminently applicable to them; yet, as we do not die unto ourselves, we may be without care as to the time of our removal, and without great anxiety as to the manner. We are not our own; and no man dieth to himself. We cannot condemn the venerable Hooker, who said, "Lord, I owe to thee a death; let it not be terrible." This is a proper request; but we are not to be extreme in our anxieties. Let us rather be anxious to glorify God in our death; and he will take care of all the rest. Perhaps in extreme suffering we may show a power of patience which "pain and death defies;" a great triumph, an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord, may be granted to us; we may be subjected to a severe previous struggle. Perhaps our death may be a calm dying into life; a summer wave gently rippling to the shore. It is enough. Let us live to him, and in our death we shall glorify God.

III. The man who lives and dies, not to himself, but to the Lord, is the Lord's in life and death.

The meaning of this is, that he is the property of Christ and absolutely at his disposal in life and death. Yet, though this is the foundation of the most absolute obligation to love and duty, it is not urged merely as the foundation of duty. We form a cold and wrong apprehension of the religion of Christ, if we regard it under the partial views of restraint and discipline, and consider merely the authority which enforces them. In all these obligations and precepts our interests of every kind are most tenderly consulted. Christian restraint and discipline are the expressions of an infinite love.

To be the Lord's in life and death is not only to be bound to his service and glory, but to yield ourselves to his service; to be acknow-

ledged as his; guarded as his; blessed as his; honoured as his. We have seen what a Christian man renders to his Lord; let us then see what his Lord repays to him. He is the Lord's. Every thing is included in this. The Christian man is the Lord's in life. Life is our condition in the present state of existence; and of that the Lord takes the charge. "In all thy ways acknowledge him; and he shall direct thy steps." "The ways of a good man are ordered by the Lord." As certainly as he guided Israel in their journeyings by the cloud and the fire, will he guide the Christian man, though invisibly.

Life includes our earthly blessings; and they are given as far as they really tend to our advantage. We could not wish for more; and they so often come and are continued by means which truly mark the care and love of our Lord, that they have a double value, and yield a double zest in the enjoyment. The cup of blessing which he blesses sparkles with spirit, and has an everlasting freshness. It is a living spring, and not a potion from the flat, sluggish, unblessed stream of worldly enjoyments.

Life includes our afflictions: and in these the Christian man is the Lord's. He is placed in the arena in order to the contest. He may have to endure "a great fight of afflictions." One combat succeeds another; and various are the kinds of warfare in which he is called to engage. Now his strength is assailed; then his patience; then his faith; then his meekness; then his heavenly mindedness; then his sympathies. The enemy endeavours to succeed by force and by fraud. Now the Christian man's power is defied; then his pride is flattered; his corruptions are now the instruments of assault, and sometimes even his virtues. But there is still one with him, whose he is, and whom he serves; and often is he cheered by his voice, breaking through the strife of the combat, "Greater is he that is for you, than all that are against you."

But the Christian man is the Lord's in life in a nobler sense than even this. Life is the period in which we are to be trained up for the maturity of holiness, and the perfection and variety of Christian graces. He who lives not to himself but to the Lord, is selected for this purpose. This is the high object of all the dispensations of Him who has claimed the believer for his own. For this, innumerable agencies receive their commission. Blessings, bereavements, joys, sorrows, difficulties, temptations, the communion of saints, the ordinances of religion, the labours of ministers, the mighty working of the Spirit, "all are yours; for ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." All these are commissioned to deepen the principles of moral character; to burnish into greater splendour the graces of a renewed mind, and to perfect habits for which corresponding acts of greatness and of glory are to be assigned in a higher state.

And the Christian man is the Lord's in death. The body is laid down in the dust in hope; the grave has been sanctified by the body of Christ; and the key is in his hands. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," may every saint of God say, "till my change come. Then thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; and thou shalt have respect unto the work of thy own hands." But the spirit,—where is that during this appointed time? On this subject Scripture is not silent. When absent from the body, it is present with the Lord. The Chris-

tian man is the Lord's. He has served in the outer apartments of the house; and he is now called into the presence chamber. "Blessed," says Christ, in language of astonishing condescension, "blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

Thus, then, it is required of us that we live not to ourselves, but to the Lord; and these are the rewards. We conclude the subject by observing that this great principle is one which, like all others, is founded on the highest reason.

1. It is founded on justice.

To live to ourselves only is unjust. Our obligations to God are absolute. "What hast thou which thou hast not received" from him? Being and all its endowments are his gift. But it is not only unjust in regard to the rights of God, but also with respect to those circumstances of dependence upon others in which he has placed us. He who lives to himself ought in justice to live by himself. He who will give nothing to others ought to receive nothing from them. But in such cases man could not have existed at all, or only in circumstances of absolute darkness and misery. Your earliest years were years of absolute dependence upon your parents and guardians. Your knowledge is the fruit of the studies and communications of other minds. Your well being in society is the result of efforts of many others made for the common good. Would you have received even your Christianity, if others had only lived to themselves? If the calculations of selfishness had been listened to, would the Gospel have reached us? Like our forefathers, we should have been in our woods, eating acorns, and worshipping devils.

Is it possible that any man can indulge a selfish feeling when he considers in how abundant a degree others minister to his necessities? A sun which he did not light up warms the selfish man; seasons which he did not arrange provide his food; God, who made him, ministers life to him every moment, or he could not exist; Jesus Christ lived and died, not for himself, but for this man; and he is receiving daily ten thousand benefits, civil, intellectual, and religious, for which he is indebted to the kind charities and disinterested labours of others; and yet he turns upon his own axis, never takes an excursion of benevolence, and does no good, except from some natural instinct, or some necessity!

Here justice is violated. He takes, and gives not; and benefits fall on him like showers upon an accursed soil. Nothing is produced. It is a field from which "the reaper filleth not his hand, nor the mower his bosom; neither do they that go by say, We bless you in the name of the Lord."

2. It is founded upon benevolence.

It cannot be doubted but that God might have rendered men much less dependent upon others than they are. He might himself have more immediately ministered to our wants, and more seldom have employed second causes; or he might have made our wants fewer, or rendered us more able to supply them by our own exertions; but what would then have been the consequence? There would have been less gratitude, and less affection, among the various ranks of being. Each

would have stood unconnected with the rest, and have felt less concern for them. In the order which God has established the case is different. We see a series of dependencies connected; man with man; men with angels; and all with God. The relations of child and parent, master and servant, rich and poor, ministers and people, friend and friend, Christian and Christian, all suppose dependence; and hence benevolence is called forth and seen. They all produce kind and active affections. The order has been broken by sin and selfishness; but it is the object of the Gospel to restore us from our fall, and teach us to live, not to ourselves, but to God, and for the benefit of one another; and when this principle shall universally prevail, the earth will be turned to paradise. Christ will gather into one family every thing in heaven and earth. Let us as far as we can make a paradise about us. Let us enter into, and breathe, the spirit of the Gospel: we shall then relieve miseries, produce happiness, and do our part to hasten that period when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and when the world shall form but one family, united in itself, and blessed with the constant smile of the common "Father which is in heaven."

3. This is a principle eminently founded upon the ministerial character.

A minister of Christ living to himself is the most pitiable object on which the eye can fall. He has assumed a profession of self denial, and he is self indulgent; he has entered a calling which is denominated holy, and he has been secular; he has taken the oversight of souls, and he has looked only to his own interests. He has himself slumbered, when his business was to keep the world awake. To him was committed the cause of Christ, which he was to advance; and he has been indifferent to the general movement, if his department of the machine has had activity enough to grind him his daily bread.—What will that servant say when his Lord cometh? And come he will. How will he appear, when confronted with apostles and apostolic men, into whose labours he has entered, and who dropped before him a mantle of spirit and of zeal which he has been too slothful to take up? "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." "Give an account of thy stewardship," shall, ere long, rouse thee from thy slumber. Then the warnings thou hast softened, then the promises thou hast criminally applied, then the souls thou hast neglected, then the sick beds thou hast forsaken, then the solemn duties thou hast slumbered over, shall all start into recollection. O terrible day, when judgment shall begin at the house of God, and unfaithful ministers shall be singled out for eminence of shame and signal punishment!

For you, my dear brethren,* we have better hopes. At your first entrance upon the ministry of Jesus, you have given proof that the principle of the text has been planted in mighty operation within you. You go to live, not to yourselves, or the high and arduous missionary path would not have invited you. But water the principle by your daily prayers, and your daily watchings, that though we see you not for many intervening years, and some of you, or some of us, not till the day when we shall all stand together before the judgment seat of Christ, "we may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind,

* This sermon was preached at the ordination of several missionaries.

striving together for the faith of the Gospel." Take the apostle of the Gentiles for your model. Next to Christ, you cannot have a greater. See him live, not unto himself, but to the Lord. Have you made sacrifices? Count them all but dross, that you may win Christ. Are you anxious for knowledge? Let it be the most excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ. Have you intercourse with men? Let it be in meekness and condescension that you may gain some. Will your lot be various? Learn how to be abased, and how to abound. Every where, and in all things, be instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. Let the love of Christ constrain you; and, knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuade men. Have you the cares of Churches? Like him, make prayers to God for them day and night with tears. Aim at once at his lofty magnificence, and his tender condescensions; at his lofty daring, and his flowing sympathies. And, finally, like him, look constantly to the day of Christ, that then it may appear you have neither run in vain, nor laboured in vain. One approving smile of your Lord, then, will compensate any labour, any suffering. All will be for ever swallowed up in the unutterable happiness which will follow that sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

4. Finally, let us see the great end of life.

It is, to live to please God; to live as Christ lived on earth; soberly, righteously, godly, benevolently. As Christians we employ talents which will be rewarded in another state. We thus prepare for death; and in that awful moment what a heaven will it be to us to know that we die to him; and that, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's! The God you worship lives not to himself. He "makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good." The Saviour, whose name you bear, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Go, and do ye likewise. "Simon," said Jesus to Peter, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

SERMON XXVIII.—*The servant of God dismissed and rewarded.*

"But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days," Daniel xii, 13.

"OUR fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?" These questions are answered by the mournful records of the Church, and our own constant observation. We live to die; and there is no exemption from the common lot. The most distinguished characters, the most useful lives, have in their successive generations passed away; for religion, which saves us from so much, does not shield us from the stroke of mortality. It blunts the point, but does not avert the dart, of death. "The body is" still "dead because of sin," even when "the spirit is life because of righteousness." The honourable, the wise, and the good, mingle with the base, the noxious, and the impious, in the house of earth and silence. The sentence of death with respect to the body is not yet reversed; nor would this be

consistent with a state of trial. There are the most important reasons for the continuance of this state of things. Exemption from death, as the reward of piety, would be to offer too tempting a boon to those who are wandering from God, to induce them to return to him. It would present an earthly motive to prepare for a holy and a spiritual world. It would come too forcibly upon the wills of men to allow them freedom of choice. We, indeed, if left to our own judgments, might reverse this appointment; and make, at least, many exceptions. We should be unwilling that infant innocence should be subject to disease; we should be reluctant that opening youth should be blighted by premature death; and, more especially, we should wish to retain the ancient prophets, and the saints of God, whose wisdom and example are matured, and who are in consequence able to instruct us. But this option is not granted to us; and therefore all nations have had to build tombs for their patriots, and all Churches to raise monuments to their pastors.

To this fiat the best of men in all ages have been subject; and the text intimates, that Daniel himself, highly favoured as he was of God, could plead no exemption from the common lot. He is one of the most spotless characters upon record. His youth and age were equally devoted to God; and he might have taken up the language of another distinguished character of the Bible, and said, "Thy way have I kept, and not declined; neither have I gone back from the commandments of thy lips," Job xxiii, 11, 12. In the most difficult circumstances he maintained his integrity. He was a prince; and continued pure and upright amidst the fascinations of a court. He confessed the name of the true God before idolatrous princes, and was not ashamed; and would have been a martyr, but that God preserved him by miracle. Yet he doubtless received, on account of his devotedness to truth and conscience, the martyr's crown. He was one of the most favoured of the prophets of the Most High. Visions of the future, more distinct and comprehensive than were vouchsafed to any other of the sacred writers, were spread before his eye. Yet, notwithstanding this, and though his life was peculiarly valuable to "the afflicted of Joseph," at the particular crisis when he was called away; yet the same angel that had spoken to him of things to come, at length gives him his dismissal from his work, and summons him to another state. He was a patriot, aiding his people in distress, and still forming plans for their good; but his work was done, his purposes frustrated, and his plans left for others to execute. Neither his character, nor the wants of his countrymen, could revoke the sentence of the angel, who concludes his revelations by saying, "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

The subject, you will perceive, is the dismissal of the servant of God from his work and service on earth, to his eternal rest and reward. I observe,

1. That we are all, like Daniel, servants of God, and charged with the performance of that work which he has respectively assigned us, arising out of our situation in life, and the various duties and engagements connected with it.

1. We have our providential work to do.

Divine Providence has placed every man in his peculiar situation,

and assigned every man his work. The situation and work of mankind are various; but the appointment is of God. Some are appointed to guide the plough; others, to direct the loom. Some to toil; others, to think and direct. Some, to study and teach; others, to receive direction and instruction. Some are to submit, others are to govern Every man has his providential appointment given him; and he may discover it, if he wish to do so. Whatever our situation is, God himself, in the counsels of his wise providence, has placed us in it, and connected with it certain duties. To every man he has said, "Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." There are some persons who imagine that the labours which arise from providential circumstances are distinct from piety, and obstructive of it. But this is an error. They may be made so; but they are not so necessarily. They are parts of duty which, if performed in reference to the glory of God, from religious motives, and with a regard to religious ends, as they may be, will secure the Divine blessing, and promote, not hinder, our eternal welfare. No man has a charter to be idle. Men of the most ample fortunes are the servants of God. A thousand doors of usefulness stand open before such persons as are exempt from the necessity of daily toil, and to whom God has been bountiful in the gifts of his providence. The man who buries his talent in the earth is deeply guilty, and incurs the displeasure of his Lord. Idleness as infallibly destroys the soul as open sin committed against God. We are all stewards of his manifold gifts; God himself will at length say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward."

2. Our connection with the Church of Christ opens to us another class of services.

By the word Church I mean a congregation of faithful men who associate together for the purpose of promoting their own personal piety. Every such congregation is a Christian Church; and every man ought to be connected with the Church of Christ in some of its branches. Many blessings are given to the Church in its collective character; and no man can exempt himself from union with it, without endangering his growth in grace, and perhaps, in many respects, without endangering the salvation of his soul. To some Church it is the duty of all good men to belong. The wicked have nothing to do with such institutions; and nothing with the name of Christ. If a man will not submit to the rules of the Gospel, let him erase his name from the baptismal register, pull off the unhallowed badge of religion, and be "a heathen man and a publican."

As members of religious society, we have our duties. When a man is made a partaker of the religion of Christ, it is not designed for his benefit only. When we are ourselves "converted," we are to "strengthen the brethren." "No" Christian "man liveth to himself, and no" Christian "man dieth to himself." We are not therefore to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching." "Let your light shine before men." "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine, holding forth the word of life." "As ye have opportunity, do good to all men." Every man that professes the name of Christ is bound to promote his cause.

I do not say that he ought to do this in the spirit of party, but in the spirit of Christianity. He ought to consider that his peculiar business on earth is to counteract what is evil, and to bring "the wickedness of the wicked to an end;" to spread the religion of Jesus Christ as far as lies in his power; to spread the savour of his name to all around, till the light shine from Zion, and illuminate every dark place of the earth. Our calling is to promote the interests of piety among our brethren, and truth and reformation in the world. It is no part of our work and duty to forward the interests of our religious party, as a party; but as the interests of religion. We are to stand between the living and the dead, the porch and the altar, and cry, "Spare thy people, O Lord!" We are to stem the torrent of iniquity, promote the influence of truth, and endeavour to extend the religion of the Son of God to every land.

3. There is also a work arising out of our personal salvation.

Let no man mistake me here. The work of salvation can only be effected by strong and vigorous efforts. There is no need to tell us, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure;" that "without him we can do nothing;" and that we cannot of ourselves form a gracious thought, or a good desire. We know these things; but let no man plead them as an excuse for his own sloth. Let no man think to find in these doctrines a license for neglecting the things which belong to his peace. God works in us; but he also works by us. He saves us; but he effects our salvation by giving energy and application to our own powers; and in the strength which he imparts he calls us to resist evil, to watch and pray, to mortify our corruptions, to cultivate our knowledge, and every grace. This is our personal and our daily work. The principle of life, and light, and influence, is free and sovereign in its first communication, and in its subsequent communications too; but it is a principle of action. Hear how the apostle speaks concerning the operation of God with our co-operation: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you," Phil. ii, 12, 13. It is very true, as an old writer observes, that we can do nothing without God; and it is equally true that God will do nothing without us, in the great work of our salvation. Every man will find, on examination, that he has but one business on earth; and that is, to make his own calling and election sure. We are to give all "diligence, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." The work of repentance, dreary and cheerless as it is, must be performed; prayer is to be constantly offered; the heart must be kept in a devotional frame; sin is to be resisted; temptation is to be overcome; self is to be conquered; affliction is to be borne with patience; the blessings of life are to be enjoyed with moderation; we are daily to free ourselves from earthly entanglements, and be aspiring after the mind that was in Christ; that, being conformed to the image of God, we may be prepared for "the inheritance of the saints in light."

To all these duties and engagements a strong motive arises out of the consideration, that we are God's servants, placed at our post by him, and have our work assigned us; and that we have a Master in heaven, under whose authority and direction we act. Inspiring consideration! that every duty assigned us from day to day is the work which God has given us to do. Frequently to reflect upon this will

produce the happiest results. It will spread a kind of sanctity over our common engagements. We are doing the work of God, filling up the part he has assigned us. It is supporting under difficulties to remember that, "To conquer them is my work." This is a consideration which would animate all our works of faith and zeal, "We are acting under the eye of Him that sent us." Recollect in your trouble, that your work, your proper and special work, is to bear and sustain. Thus even Christ, as a man, felt; and hence he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day." "I have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of. My meat is to do the will of my Father, and to finish his work." St. Paul was animated by this feeling when he uttered that sentiment which ought to be written in our hearts, and engraven in every memory: "There stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve," Acts xxvii, 23. Thus the Luthers, the Wesleys, and the Cokes felt; men who were eminent for zeal and usefulness. Their motto was, "I must be about my Father's business." "I serve the Lord Christ." And thus ought we all to feel. We are fixed in our post; and there we must remain, till the Lord say, "Go thy way." Wo to the sentinel who sleeps at his post! Wo to the soldier who leaves the field before the battle is won! Wo to that servant, who, because his Lord delays his coming, "begins to eat and to drink with the drunken." "The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxiv, 50, 51. But blessed, beyond all conception blessed, is the servant who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found watching! the servant who, like Daniel, is still employed in the work of faith and labour of love till the message is whispered in his ear, "Go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

But our text not only contains the dismissal of Daniel from his work, but,

II. An important intimation of the termination of all things. "Go thy way till the *end* be." There will be an end; or, as the apostle expresses it, an "end of all things."

It is a remarkable circumstance, and cannot fail to remind us of the sloth of the human race, that we feel so little interest in contemplating the end of all things. There is scarcely any thing else that can be called important in which we do not feel an interest. We see a project, and we trace it to its accomplishment, and feel an interest in searching it to its end. We mark the struggles of nations; we see their fortunes placed in doubtful scales; the attention is deeply excited; and we look forward to the end with interest and anxiety. We read some tale of real or even of artificial wo; and it so far excites our feelings and attention, that we are restless till we have gone through all the circumstances, till the tale issues, and we are acquainted with the catastrophe. If things so trifling can so rivet our attention, how strange it is, that we feel so little interest in contemplating the vast issues of the system of Providence, or even of grace itself! But there shall be an "end."

1. There will be an end of the providential dispensations of God.

This is strongly marked in the text, which follows a series of pro-

phecies relating to the fate of empires. No man was ever allowed to penetrate deeper into futurity than Daniel; and no man was ever favoured with more circumstantial views of the rise, character, and fall of nations. The future was displayed before him in vast extent and minuteness. He saw the four great monarchies of the earth—the Persian, the Macedonian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires—rise, triumph, desolate the earth, and sink into oblivion. He tracked the successive conquerors; and at the miseries brought upon mankind by ambition, he had fainted, and there was no spirit left in him. He had witnessed the destruction of the temple of God, and one captivity of his people; and in vision he now beheld another. He saw the temple rebuilt, and again destroyed; the people again collected, and again scattered, wandering over the earth without a priest, and without a sacrifice, for many generations. He looked over the scenes of darkness, change, and tumult which characterize our own times, and even beyond them: his eye rested on the kingdom of Christ; and especially on that period which shall establish his universal reign. He caught an encouraging glimpse of the glories of a better state of the world than had ever been previously seen. Yet vast and interesting as all these changes appeared, though he had indeed seen the kingdoms of the earth, and the glories of them, he is admonished that all these splendid scenes would finally vanish. An angel reminds him that an end will be put to the dispensations of Providence with respect to nations and empires. "Go thou thy way till the end be." A time will come when all the tumults of the earth will be hushed into silence.—All that has influenced and excited the attention of man shall appear but as a bubble caused by the violence of the waves upon the surface of the ocean, which swells and glitters for awhile in the sunbeam, and then breaks, and dissolves into the boundless expanse which first gave it birth. Let us learn this important lesson, that here we have no continuing city. All that appears most stable and fixed on earth is subject to the same changes. All is passing away, and all is fleeting, but the spiritual blessings which are treasured up in Jesus Christ, and are connected with the unchangeableness of the Divine Being. Ah, why should we feel surprise at the changes in our own circles, when things so vast, so firm, so lasting, must end and be forgotten!

2. There will be an end of that which is of infinitely more importance than the concerns of empires,—the mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Of that Daniel had an interesting view. He looked forward to the time when the babe of Bethlehem should be born; to the time when that sacrifice which makes an end of sin should be offered; when the dying Lamb of God should spring from the cross to the throne, anointed with regal oil, and be made the Lord of heaven and earth. Before Daniel the triumphs of the Gospel were displayed; before him those glorious scenes which now gladden our hearts passed in review; yet he was reminded that there would be an end, not only of the administrations of Providence, but also of those of grace. This subject ought frequently to be impressed upon our minds by meditation. Jesus Christ has a kingdom more extensive than that of any earthly monarch. He rules from the river to the ends of the earth. His kingdom cannot be moved by the revolutions of nations. It shall be finally set up in

every land, and in every heart; for "this Gospel shall be preached in all nations, and then shall the end be." It shall spread its authority and influence over men; and happy and honoured shall they be who are instrumental in diffusing its blessings. Yes, let him receive the warmest congratulations from all good men, who unfurls the sacred banner in the lands of idolatry and pagan darkness, and teaches the heathen the way of life. Let the memory of those who fall in this hallowed cause be affectionately cherished; and let their names stand prominent in the records of the Church. The greatest charity is that of giving instruction to the ignorant. The greatest heroism is the heroism of the missionary. The greatest blessing that nations can receive is the Gospel. But we are never to forget that even the great redeeming scheme shall have an end. The Gospel will not always be preached, offering salvation to the guilty. It shall be preached to all nations; but only till "the end." The time will come when this book will be shut, the invitation recalled, and the promise revoked. The Saviour will not always be the Mediator between man and God. He must exchange the office of Intercessor for that of Judge; the priestly robe, for the garments of clouds and darkness, the ensigns of his judicial authority; the sceptre, for the sword; the voice of entreaty and persuasion, for that of authority and command. If you have improved your day of grace, and the means of salvation, well; but if not, all beyond is inexorable justice and boundless misery. If you have entered in at the door of mercy, well; but if not, then they that are without shall begin to knock, and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" but he will say, "Depart from me, I know you not." "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power: for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Blessed indeed will those persons be, who, when the end shall come, will find their names written in the Lamb's book of life!

3. There shall be an end of the world itself.

The heavens and earth, that now are, are reserved unto fire; they shall pass away before the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and shall leave the human race, either gathered with God, or dismissed from his presence with positive and remediless punishment. The sentence is passed; the world is condemned; the heavens shall pass away; and the elements melt with fervent heat. The stars shall fall like the fruit of the fig tree. New heavens and a new earth shall spring into being; and the old heavens and earth shall be forgotten.—Thus the saint is dismissed; and in the meantime all things hasten to their end.

While the text suggests these great and impressive thoughts, it also presents us with a sublime view of the dignity of an immortal human spirit. "Go thou thy way till the end be:" the end of suns, stars, and worlds; the end of empires, and providential dispensations; the end of the offices of Christ; the end of the redeeming scheme: "for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." After an end has been put to these things, Daniel, and every other human being, shall be found in existence, to witness the dissolution of universal nature, and to survive it. Though the successive empires of the world pass away; though the vast wheels of Providence complete their

mighty rounds; though the offices of Christ be but temporary; though the pillars of the earth shall bow; though the everlasting hills shall give way; yet above the wreck of all nature, the human spirit shall be seen reposing on the unshaken rock of its own immortality, defying the ravages of time, and the possibility of decay; and shall behold the destruction of all this vast machinery. Even the very words that are applied to God may, without presumption, be applied to a human spirit, because it is his image: "These shall perish, but thou remainest. They all shall wax old, as doth a garment; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The text presents to us,

III. An interesting view of the state of the pious dead between death and the end of all things: "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest."

It cannot mean annihilation, as philosophy would interpret the text; for that is not "rest,"—it is nothing. It cannot mean that the soul shall lose its consciousness between death and the termination of all things, when the body shall be raised. This philosophy would teach us; but where does unhallowed philosophy rest? And is not that philosophy ever unhallowed which does not respect the dictates of Christianity? which allows itself only to be guided by the inspired writers, so far as those writers sanction its own speculations; but, when there is any disagreement, assumes that itself is the infallible guide to truth? The conscious existence of the soul after death has been denied by some persons who have professed to receive the Christian system; and this shows the evil consequence of indulging the daring and licentious habit of philosophizing on subjects which are determined by the Scriptures. On philosophic grounds it might not be easy to disprove the position of the speculatists in question. We cannot, indeed, on those grounds demonstrate the immortality of the soul; and consequently the probabilities are against the opinion that it will exist after death as perfectly as it does now: but we do not give so much credit to philosophy as to admit that she can settle this point. It is settled by God in his own word; and there is a danger of indulging the speculations of an unsanctified philosophy upon the sacred truths of revelation. Who, by lighting his taper, can give splendour to the sun? Who can think that the sun's effulgence is diminished if his taper be put out? The plain and unequivocal language of Scripture puts the subject beyond all doubt. It conveys a cheering hope to the mind of the Christian. It would be so much of a detraction, if we could suppose the soul of any saint to cease to be conscious of the presence of God, or of its own existence, for one or many ages. Hear, then, the words of Scripture. Jesus said to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." When Stephen closed his eyes under the stones of his murderers, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." St. Paul declares that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord;" and he desired "to depart, and be with Christ, which," says he, "is far better." He certainly could not mean, that it was "far better" to be in an unconscious state than to enjoy Christ, and to be actively employed in his service.

The spirit then shall "rest," not in the cold embrace of death,—not by the suspension of its consciousness. It shall rest, as the traveller

rests, not when he falls asleep under the fatigue of the way; but after he has passed his dangerous journey, and feels himself at home in the bosom of his family, and amidst the circle of his friends. It shall rest, as the soldier rests, not when he slumbers after the toils of battle; but when, as listening age and wondering youth surround him, he relates the hazards of the campaign, and feels himself escaped from danger, and in a state of security and peace. The "rest" promised in the text may be defined as the composure and settled triumph of the spirit, escaped from wind, tempest, battle, danger; and at home with God.—This "rest" is contrasted with all the changes which this book of prophecy describes. Empires rise and fall; wars, famines, pestilences, desolate the earth; one change succeeds another, as wave succeeds wave in a tempest; but the spirit of Daniel is directed to a higher region, to the heaven of God, where it should rest, as all the spirits of the just rest; and only look down upon all these changes, and mark the developement of the plans of God, in the success and triumphs of the kingdom of Christ. There the saint of God shall rest from the vicissitudes of life, from trouble and disappointment, from sorrow and affliction; and this will be no trifling attainment, to have blessings without change, health without sickness, and pleasure without pain; the bloom without the blight, sunshine without a cloud. But not on these advantages would we principally dwell. In the rest of the saint in heaven are included two things, which, to my mind at least, give it an indescribable glory. It will be a rest from religious labours; and a rest from religious fears.

1. From religious labours.

Piety is a labour. It is so all the way through. We can never attain a state in this world in which the utmost effort will not be necessary. The heart does not naturally ascend to God, but must be kept up by the application of force. The apostle compares the Christian life to that which requires the strongest efforts. The Christian is to be armed from head to foot, and to "fight the good fight of faith." He is opposed in the career of holy duty; and must "wrestle, not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places." A race is set before him; and he is to "forget the things that are behind, and reach to those which are before, and press toward the mark, for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Such a state is incompatible with complete enjoyment. It is a state of enjoyment; but the enjoyment is not perfect. Can that be a state of perfect enjoyment in which you are to watch every movement, lest your heart depart from the living God? in which the heart requires so many motives to keep it right? and which, after all, leaves us to lament over so many defects? Such labours can have no place in heaven; and hence the saint rests from them all after his dismissal. The heart will then move upward to God by its own nature; there will be no flesh to render nugatory the pious volitions of the spirit. We shall then enter another clime; and in that state God will be thought of, perceived, loved, and enjoyed, without effort, and with infinite ease. This is "rest."

2. From religious fears.

There is a fear, that of falling from God, of which we ought never

in this world to divest ourselves. This is the guard of our piety; and hence it is said, "Blessed is the man that feareth alway." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." No fear, however, is consistent with perfect enjoyment. Our present condition, whatever may be our gracious attainments, is not one of absolute safety; and therefore is not a state of perfect enjoyment. "I fast," says the apostle, "and keep my body under; lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Who can but fear, when his immortal spirit is trembling between heaven and hell? The word of Divine grace is often compared to seed sown in the earth. To how many hazards is it exposed before it is rooted in the ground! And after it has sprung up, and "the valleys stand thick with corn," when can we say it is safe? Our fears are not entirely removed till the wheat is gathered into the garner.

The questions, whether glorified spirits are free agents, and, if free, whether they are not liable to fall, have often been proposed. The questions have their difficulties, when considered philosophically. The thought of falling is terrible and, if indulged,

> "Would drink up all our bliss,
> And quite unparadise the realms of light."

But the Gospel sets this question at rest. All the representations of the heavenly state found in the Scriptures convey the idea of glory, eternal and unchangeable. The harvest is no longer in the field, exposed to blight, but is gathered into the garner. The gates of the celestial city shut the wicked out, and the righteous in. We may there give full scope to joy: whereas, in our highest elevation here, a voice whispers, "Be not high minded, but fear." "Because I live, ye shall live also," is the glorious charter by which we hold our heaven. There the believer shall rest. This lower world shall be agitated, as it has been in this region of clouds and tempest; one storm shall succeed another, and gleams of sunshine be followed by days of darkness and gloom: but in that higher region where he dwells all is noiseless tranquillity, all is perpetual calmness and peace, all is unclouded light, all is rest; or, when this silent heaven of love is interrupted, it is when the full chorus of praise ascends from every redeemed spirit to God and the Lamb.

IV. We have some very important instruction afforded us by the closing part of the angel's address to Daniel. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

Here is an allusion to the manner in which the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes of Israel. It was given to them by lot. The whole of their history at that period was typical. The exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt, their travels in the wilderness, their passage over the river Jordan, their establishment in Canaan, were all figurative events. God calls his Church out of the Egypt of spiritual thraldom, and Satanic tyranny; he puts himself at their head; the disobedient fall; but the faithful are conducted through every danger, and receive every promised blessing; the Jordan of death flies before them; and they enter their land of rest, and "stand in their lot." The allusion suggests to us,

1. That the heaven which is looked for by the Christian is secured to him by the same faithful word and unchanging covenant as those by which Canaan was secured to the Israelites.

Canaan was promised to Abraham and his posterity. "Arise," said the Lord to the holy patriarch, "and walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it."—There were, however, many improbabilities that the Israelites would ever possess that country. Several years elapsed before the promise was fulfilled; the people were brought to a low condition; and their faith in God's word was put to frequent trial while they were passing through the wilderness. At last the faithful all entered in, and witnessed that no word had fallen to the ground of all that the Lord had spoken. In this we have a noble and instructive example of the faithfulness of God. Your hopes, Christians, have been ridiculed. The men of the world have charged you with believing a cunningly-devised fable; but your hope and faith have been firmly fixed on God. Yet your own hearts have frequently put you to trial; and you have either doubted the existence of the good land itself, or have been afraid that the kind hand of God would not conduct you thither. You can, however, say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." The same hand that has brought you to this time is still supporting you; and when you join the sanctified above, you will witness, like the tribes of Israel, that not one jot or tittle of all that God has promised has remained unfulfilled. Stand, then, as upon Pisgah's height, and see the land afar off. It is secured to you by that word which shall stand when heaven and earth are fled and gone.

2. There is an allusion to the appointment of the rewards of heaven, with reference to that variety of natural or acquired character which the saints may have possessed. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord," Prov. xvi, 33.

The lot of the different tribes of Israel was determined by the Lord; and this was doubtless done with reference to the peculiar character and genius of each. As a taste for agriculture, a pastoral life, or commerce, predominated, they had the fertile fields, the vineyards, the sea coast, the hills and valleys. Asher had "the finest of the wheat;" Judah, abundance of wine and cattle; Zebulun, "the haven of the sea;" and the others were situated in like manner. If there was a reference to character in the appointment of the lot in the earthly Canaan, we may, without presumption, expect that there will be the same in the heavenly inheritance. The heaven that God has prepared will be various in its rewards. Variety is a characteristic of perfection, not of imperfection. It is consistent with unity, and makes unity more complete; and it not only beautifies, but gives strength. We see this in society on earth; and it will be more complete in that place where all is perfection. There shall be a lot for every saint; and such a lot as is best adapted to his own personal character; for minds are naturally of different orders, and even good men greatly differ in their spiritual attainments.

3. But the idea of variety is not only suggested by the text, but also degree. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot;" that for which thou art specially fitted.

That there are different rewards in heaven, accords with our best

ideas. Every man shall have his own lot. If the patriarchs and prophets, the martyrs and confessors, the apostles and evangelists, the experienced saints, those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, were to have no higher degrees of happiness than ordinary Christians, it would contradict our best notions of the Divine government. But Jesus Christ himself has decided this question. Rule, thou who hast increased thy five pounds to ten, over ten cities; and thou, who hast increased thy pound into five, rule thou over five cities: and thus it is, that every man, though he strictly deserves nothing, is in this distribution rewarded according to his work. Blessed is he that is faithful in little, as in much; for God shall give him the true riches. This stamps an immense importance upon every moment of our time, and on every action of our life. We are either diminishing our lot, or enriching it. Our actions are like seed sown in the earth, which must produce their harvest. "The harvest is the end of the world." "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." What a motive to exertion! We must not forget to state, that the contrary of this is equally true. As every laborious and diligent saint of God is enriching his lot, and laying up a more copious measure of glory, so every wicked man, through every action of his life, is increasing his guilt and punishment. He is "treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath;" and preparing for himself a lot of remediless wo, and unspeakable misery for ever. O dreadful thought, that man should not only live to make a death bed miserable, but also to heighten the wretchedness of his condition through all eternity!

4. The period is here fixed when the servants of God shall enter upon their full reward. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot *at the end of the days.*"

This is a striking expression. Days belong only to time; and therefore it must be when time is ended, that the full reward shall be conferred. There is a period coming,—and let that swell the bosom of every saint with hope,—there is a kind of existence approaching, which cannot be measured by days. "At the end of the days!" Our present existence is parcelled out into years, days, hours, and minutes: but all these are as nothing; they sink like drops of water into the mighty and boundless ocean of eternity; and there they are lost. No days, years, ages, no computation, not the world's existence itself, can be brought into the slightest comparison with those rounds which are denominated eternity. There will then be no revolution of stars and suns, to show us how rapidly our time is diminishing; but one blaze of light, one eternal noon. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Ah! if you obtain a lot among the sanctified, what absolute joy will result from the contemplation of its eternity! There will be no running through the period of your existence; no living it out; but there will be before you the vastness of eternity, in which to expatiate and improve. One of the most delightful thoughts to the glorified spirit will be that it has entered into a state to which there will be no termination. "This is my condition, and this is eternity!" On the other hand, how dreadful will be the state of the damned! What darkness and horror settle round their condition, on the consideration that there is an end of the days, and that theirs is a state of unalterable wo and pain!

"This portion is mine; and it is nothing but misery; a constant *now* of alienation from God: and, as far as the eye can scan, that separation from God must continue!"

The whole of this subject presents itself to us, in its practical bearing, in two views.

1. The faithfulness of Jesus Christ will conduct you to this happy state, if you are engaged in the work and service of God.

You see the way that conducts to everlasting happiness. "By patient continuance in well doing, we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality." The neglect of God's great salvation, trifling away your opportunities, despising the grace of God, will certainly render your separate state doleful and apprehensive; you will be continually looking out with dread for the coming of the Son of man; and that state will be succeeded by an absolute and eternal separation from God, from happiness, from heaven! "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

2. Let this subject encourage the faithful saint.

In the prospect of the end of the days, and the lot which awaits you at the coming of the Lord, you will not turn back from his precepts; you will not relinquish the service of God, in which you have found so much delight; but you will thank the Lord, and take courage in your career of holy duty. Soon will an angel of mercy whisper in your ear, "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

SERMON XXIX.—*The Conversion of Saul.*

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mighest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost," Acts ix, 17.

THE first who distinguished himself as an apostle was Peter. He had denied his Lord; but, happily for himself, he had repented and returned to his allegiance. On the day of pentecost he was the first to address the people. To him were committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and, therefore, we find him opening the door of faith both to the Jews and Gentiles.

Next to Peter, in the rank of primitive preachers, was Stephen; a man, probably, full of natural energy and power, and raised above the pitch even of an elevated nature by the flame of love and zeal, and the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. His character is very forcibly described by the historian: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." His eloquence as a preacher is shown by his sermon before the Jewish council. In his historic argument, he was calm and attractive, holding his hearers in suspense as to the bearing of the whole; but in the rush of his application, "they were cut to the heart." A congregation less perverted by sophistry, and less infatuated by prejudice and pride, would have been cut to the heart as the less-sophisticated multitude were on the day of pentecost, and have cried out, "What shall we do?" But *these*

"were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth." To their diabolic hatred of the truth he fell a sacrifice, and now, before the throne, leads up the noble army of martyrs, who have passed through "great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

In Stephen there fell a prince and a great man in the Christian Israel. "He was a burning and shining light;" but men refused to walk in it, and it was quenched amidst the sighs of the Church, and the triumphant exultations of the persecutors. An event so sinister and ominous filled the whole Church with alarm. Devout men who "carried Stephen to his burial, made great lamentation over him." The members of the Church at Jerusalem hastened from the storm at this signal, "and were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

But while the Church was crying, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth," almighty God was preparing to assert his own cause, not in vengeance, but in mercy. He was about to supply the place of Stephen with one of still greater character; to despatch truth with her arms of light, to seize, in the very camp of the enemy, a man whose learning, eloquence, and boldness should elevate the Gospel before the eyes of all the world, and who should equally confound Jew and Gentile with the fact of his conversion, and the force of his appeals. That man was Saul of Tarsus, whose name is now not less dear to us, than it was terrible to the first Christians.

This great man is first introduced to our notice by the death of Stephen; and he with whom we converse daily, and seem to have contracted a holy and tender friendship, to that death was consenting.—More than this: from that moment he became a persecutor himself. In the strong language of the Scripture, "he made havoc of the Church." He spared neither men nor women in his merciless bigotry, and by the bitterness of his ungodly zeal the Church was scattered as a flock of sheep before the wolf.

It was in one of these cruel excursions that "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter," was arrested, not by judgment, but by mercy. His destination was Damascus, and his sanguinary commission against all "of this way." He was approaching the scene of his anticipated triumphs over the followers of the Nazarene. But, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther," was the decision of a stronger than he. A light from heaven suddenly arrests his attention, and the supernatural brightness prostrates him to the earth. He hears the voice of Jesus whom he had been persecuting, and is convinced that he was both Lord and Christ. He is led blind and humbled to Damascus; the proud scholar of Gamaliel receives instructions from Ananias; and his convictions, operating on an honest but heretofore mistaken mind, make him hasten to repair the injuries he had done, and, at the hazard of his life, he preaches the once detested name of Jesus, acknowledging, with love unspeakable, that he had obtained mercy "who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."

This extraordinary occurrence has ever been considered as one of the most memorable, even in the age of extraordinary events, and can never be adverted to without instruction. We shall, therefore, consider it for this end,

I. As illustrative of the truth of Christianity;

II. As illustrative of the grace and power of Christ; and,

III. As furnishing several important practical lessons.

I. We consider this event as illustrative of the truth of Christianity.

The conversion of St. Paul proves the truth of the religion which he embraced, by showing how satisfactory, how irresistible, are its evidences when suffered to present themselves fairly to the mind. In the case of the apostle, nothing but evidence the most decisive could have effected such a change, in such a man, and at such a time. The state of his mind, and the circumstances in which he was placed, will be sufficient to prove this.

1. He had the common prejudices of a Jew against Christianity and its Founder.

Like his countrymen, uneasy under the Roman yoke, he expected a temporal deliverer, and was indignant at a claim of Messiahship where there was no outward pomp, no promise of deliverance from the dominion of foreigners. Such a Messiah as could live a subject, and then die as a malefactor, would be to him an object of complete contempt.

2. He was a Pharisee, and had the peculiarly inveterate prejudices of his sect.

Religious prejudices are, of all other kinds, the strongest; and in the present case they were reinforced by the most potent auxiliaries, —the vanity of religious knowledge, and the pride of religious perfection. It was said by the people, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" Saul would have said, "Have any of the Pharisees believed? The wisest, the most righteous men have rejected him; he must, therefore, have been an impostor." Thus briefly we may suppose him to have reasoned. The scholar of Gamaliel was not in a state of mind to receive lessons from the fishermen of Galilee.

3. He was a man of worldly ambition.

This he must have been from the very strength and buoyancy of his character. The powers we so much admire in him when hallowed, and consecrated to the service of Christ, all existed in the original constitution which God gave him. Grace implants no new faculties in the mind, but calls forth and directs those that are already there. The very qualities which made him chiefest of the apostles, would have made him first of the Pharisees. He had already arrived at great distinction. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, he could not behold the gate of honour opened to him, without pressing to enter it before many competitors. He considered his birth, connections, and religious profession all in reference to this end. His manner of speaking of them after he had renounced them shows us this. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." He had counted on them as the means of his worldly advantage.

What, then, could quench this ambition? what turn such a mind from such a pursuit, but some extraordinary event, producing the most decided conviction?

4. His very sincerity as a persecutor proves the power of that evidence which could convert such a man into a disciple.

Had he been indifferent to his own religion; had the trade of blood been irksome to him, then slighter evidence might have been sufficient

to turn him from his ungracious task. But he was one who thought that he was doing God service. He "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He believed that he acted before an approving Church, and an approving Heaven. Such a man was not easily to be convinced. These errors of judgment are to be permanently corrected only by strong and minutely-examined evidence.

5. Lastly. The temper of his mind when the great event occurred which led to his immediate conversion, was only calculated to indispose him for conviction.

Can a man be conceived to be farther from Christianity than Saul, the moment prior to his reception of it? Then was he nearest the very gate of hell when just about to enter the gate of the kingdom of heaven. What a state is that which the historian describes!—"Then Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter." His heart was hot within him. It burned with rancour and cruelty. His breath was flame. Imprecations and threats were vomited from that heart through that mouth. The volcano of his breast heaved and swelled, and poured its streams of fire on every side. A hotter brand, surely, was never quenched in the blood of the Saviour. This was no temper prepared to yield to slight evidence. And his very religion placed him beyond the reach of the ordinary means of recovery. He was young and naturally generous; but by that religion his heart was encrusted with hardness. All the softer feelings, like doves in a tempest, scared and scattered by the rage and uproar of his malignant passions, shrank into the recesses of his soul, nor dared to interpose and look out. Only a miracle could reclaim such a man. That such a man was converted, is itself proof of the miracle. Hear his own account of the miracle, given to Agrippa: "Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Now on this we remark, first, that he could not be deceived, either in the light or in the voice; or, supposing that to have been barely possible with him, yet, surely, not with those who accompanied him, at the same time. Nor could he be deceived in the fact of his blindness, and of his supernatural healing by Ananias, who gave him instruction. Nor, secondly, was he a deceiver. St. Paul was a good man; and that is our security that he would not deceive. If he were not a good man, where shall we look for one? If he who took longer journeys for purposes of benevolence than any man had ever travelled before; who endured such privations, toils, and sufferings; who sought no worldly end; who sought out, that he might benefit, the most wretched of mankind; who sympathized with the afflicted, and wept with them that wept; who at last died that he might not betray a cause in which the world was interested; if he were not a good man, no one ever lived on earth, and goodness becomes a mere name, an unreal mockery.—But if he were a good man, then is the account true, for he could not

have been deceived; and Jesus did meet him in the way, and the religion of Christ is from God.

II. We now consider this event as illustrative of the power and grace of the Saviour.

1. This was manifested as to the Church.

From the death of Stephen to this moment had persecution raged. The flock was scattered abroad. Yet the apostles remained at Jerusalem. O noble example of constant fidelity! Worthy followers of him who carried his cross up the steep of Calvary! Still the danger of the extinction of the infant Church seemed imminent; but, in this exigency, Christ interposed, by converting the most forward and ready instrument of persecution and destruction. Thus does He, as the "refiner and purifier of silver," sit by to temper the fire. Thus does he bring down the heat with the shadow of a cloud. So, after the conversion of Saul, we are told, that "then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

2. In the language addressed by Jesus to his enemy, we see a striking proof of the union between himself and his Church: "Why persecutest thou me?"

O tender proof that the Head in heaven has not forgotten his members on earth; and that he feels afresh what every member bears!—This may encourage us under ordinary troubles. There is nothing suffered on earth that is not felt in heaven. The pain of every member is carried at once to the head, the seat of sensation. "In that he suffered, being tempted, he knows how to succour them that are tempted."

But this event may be dwelt upon as a striking instance of the fact, that there are crimes committed against Christ eminently. Whatever is done against his cause as such; against his people as such; (mark this distinction;) is noticed by him, and often very remarkably avenged. Persecuting nations, persecuting individuals, nay, the slightest violence, come under this view. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." If a leaf were torn from the Bible in malice, God would regard it. The providence of the Father is charged to avenge offences against his Son.

3. We see the riches and freedom of grace as to St. Paul himself.

His sin was of a very aggravated character. There was carelessness as to proper inquiry. The attesting acts and miracles of Jesus were all condemned unheard. There was sin against the law, even while he was zealous for it; for where was the love of his neighbour? There was much wilful blindness. Had he prayed in his studies, he must have seen in the Scriptures a suffering Messiah. There was sin of the worst kind, even persecution of the cause that Christ loves; of a people dear to him. Yet was this sinner pardoned. Who, then, needs to despair? This was, indeed, of grace. Well might he afterward advocate the doctrines which exhibited this grace, and speak of himself as one in whom "Jesus Christ had shown forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

4. This event shows the power of the grace of Christ.

The apostle might well say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of

Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

We see this in the illumination of his mind. He who had studied under Gamaliel in vain, when he received the Holy Ghost became qualified, by the simple teaching of Ananias, to teach the saving truth of God. It was, indeed, God commanding the light to shine in the darkness.

This power is seen in the extinction of his worldly temper. The things which had been gain to him, he counted as loss; and was willing to suffer the loss of all things, that he might win Christ, and be found in him.

It is seen in the conquest of the love of applause. He shrinks not from reproach and shame, but glories in the cross to which he had submitted.

It is seen, too, in the moral strength that was communicated. Here is the man who had formerly been transported by his mighty passions; he now rules over his spirit, and keeps under his body, bringing it into subjection, lest he should become a castaway.

See it in the change of his temper. What a contrast does this present! He who once destroyed men's lives now lives, and is willing to die to save them. He who had no pity, now yearns over the guilt and wretchedness of the whole world. O mark the difference between the temper of the Pharisee, and of the Christian! Once he waged a war of extermination against them who thought not with himself, haling them to prison, and being exceedingly mad against them. But hear him before Agrippa: "I would that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Yes, "except these bonds." He wished them all his good, but none of his evil. And thus was his own precept exemplified in himself: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." In every thing St. Paul stands before us as a man to be admired. Yet, I confess, I admire not so much the great and lofty points of his character, as its melting tenderness. We find him weeping with them that wept, rejoicing with them that rejoiced; praying for the Churches with many tears, and uttering precepts of the tenderest kindness and charity. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Ah, brethren, he had indeed learned in the school of Him who was love itself. So glorious was the power of the grace of Christ in him.

III. I come now to consider the subject in reference to the practical lessons presented to us by it.

1. We are reminded that love is the test of religion.

It is this that distinguishes a true from a false religion; and a false profession of true religion from a true one. "The end of the commandment is charity."

2. How truly is our salvation of God!

God sought Saul: it was not Saul that first sought God. So it has been in regard to us. Though the case as to ourselves be attended with less that is remarkable, yet it is equally true. Never should we

have turned from the world and sin to God, had he not laid his hand upon us, and given us at once the disposition and the power. Still, Saul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; and it is equally our duty to obey the voice of our Saviour, calling and drawing us to himself.

3. We see that true religion implies conversion,—the change of the whole character.

Nor can any excuse for neglecting this be found in strong passions, difficult circumstances, and the like. See St. Paul. You say there was a miracle in his case. True. But his heart was not changed by that miracle. It awakened attention; it produced conviction of the truth; but it was the same grace that is given to every man which wrought the mighty change.

4. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning of it.

Therefore, interesting as is the conversion of St. Paul, the commencement of his Christian course, much more so his closing scene. It is delightful to see the victor in the triumphant anticipation of his crown: "I have fought the fight, I have finished my course." Our own conversion may have had in it something remarkable: let us take care that we do not rest on that. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

Lastly, let us be thankful that God raised up this great light for his Church. Let us study his writings, and imbibe their spirit: let us glorify God in him.

SERMON XXX.—*The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.*

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Philippians iii, 8.

WERE I to select a part of this proposition, and say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of knowledge," almost every one would be ready to assent to it. The learned would assent to it as a matter of course; and the ignorant, because they generally venerate learning.

But were the proposition as it stands in the text to be urged for general adoption, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," it might not meet with such a reception. Some would contemn it; others would coldly assent to it; and a third class would depart only to forget the subject, as of very inferior importance.

And yet no kind of knowledge comes to us so recommended, and with such sanctions. No other kind of knowledge even professes to connect itself with our immortal interests; whereas "it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

This knowledge is recommended to us also by the most influential examples. St. Paul was no ordinary man. He was well acquainted with the wisdom of the world, whether possessed by the rabbins of his own country, or the learned Greeks. But when he caught a view

of the superior glory of Christ,—as much above the brightness of the knowledge of this world, as the glory he saw when going to Damascus was above that of the midday sun,—he renounced all for it. This he could not do without loss; but all the things which had formerly been gain to him, he freely resigned. He counted all things but loss; as goods to be thrown overboard in a storm, in order that life may be preserved. Nor was this a sudden emotion. After years of trial he glories in his choice; and still esteems them but dung, that he may win Christ and his salvation.

A subject so recommended to us demands attention; and that you may be urged to the same choice, let us examine in what the excellence of the knowledge of Christ consists. It is excellent, as the word imports, pre-eminently. It shuns no comparison; but asserts a grandeur, glory, and importance, which is to be found in knowledge of no other kind.

I. Its first note of pre-eminent excellence is to be found in its certainty.

Concerning moral and religious truth mankind have often been most uncertain; and have bewildered themselves in endless speculations. And yet, on these subjects certainty is of the utmost importance.—Without it neither the understanding nor the conscience can ever be at rest; and the momentous question of a future state can only create alarm.

The certainty of the knowledge of Christ is proved by an argument of the easiest possible kind. What God teaches must be truth, absolutely. He can neither deceive, nor be deceived. The question, then, to be determined respecting Christianity is, Is this system of Divine knowledge from God? for that settles the case. This is proved most obviously, and to the understanding of all honest men, by prophecy, by miracles, and by experience.

1. By prophecy.

Man knows not the future. If men, therefore, predict truly, they are inspired by God. Christianity is attested by many prophecies; and these relating to events which were very remote, and which depended upon innumerable contingencies which no human sagacity could have foreseen; and not a few of these have received an accomplishment, most marked and circumstantial. The conclusion is inevitable: "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

2. By miracles.

Man cannot open the eyes of the blind, nor cure inveterate diseases by a touch, nor raise the dead. If, then, men have done all these things in proof that the Gospel is true, they spoke under the sanction of almighty God. He has, therefore, set his seal to the doctrine of Christ, and attested at once its truth and Divine authority

3. By experience.

This also is a sure test. Christianity appeals to experience. It declares that certain supernatural results shall follow upon the use of particular means. The weary and heavy laden, who come to Christ, shall find rest unto their souls. Peace and joy are consequent upon believing in him. The heart is purified by faith. The prayer of faith shall be answered. The way of practical holiness is a way of pleasantness and peace. What, then, is the fact? Let the appeal be made

to sincere Christians in every age and place. Have they used the remedy in vain? Does the Gospel describe a state of heart which they have never found? Has their prayer never been answered? Do wisdom's ways answer the description given of them? Speaking of his Father, our Lord said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John vii, 17.

By prophecy, miracles, and the unanimous testimony of experienced Christians, the Gospel is confirmed to us as the sure word of God. O blessed knowledge, so assured! Tossed on a sea of doubt,

> "Here is firm footing, here is solid rock.
> This can sustain us: all is sea beside."

II. Its second character of excellence is its majesty and grandeur.

Great thoughts in religion are necessary for man; and true religion must in its own nature have them. It is one of the characteristics of false religion to inculcate low thoughts of God and of Divine things. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

Mark the class and order of thoughts which the knowledge of Christ makes familiar even to the most simple of mankind. There is the conception of God; the first cause of all things; existing from eternity to eternity, "without variableness or shadow of turning;" infinite in wisdom and might; filling heaven and earth with his presence; essentially holy, just, and true; yet delighting in the exercise of mercy and benevolence. He is the Judge of men; has given them a perfect law; his eye is upon every transgression; and he is just to punish. Yet, in the plenitude of his compassion to our race, he has given his Son to redeem them, and his Spirit to renew their nature. He has opened to us the gate of pardon; he adopts believers as his children; and sets before them the prospect of glory, honour, and eternal life.

What thoughts are these, apprehended by the most simple of pious people! While they elevate the mind, they transform it. For "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

III. A third illustration of the excellence of this knowledge is its suitableness and adaptation.

It is, in all its parts, knowledge *for us*. We do not undervalue any kind of useful knowledge; many branches of which are of great importance to man. By agriculture the fruits of the earth are obtained, and the wants of man and beast are supplied. Some of the arts tend to alleviate the sufferings of humanity; others minister to our intellectual and moral improvement; and the rest may be rendered subservient to the innocent gratification of mankind. Man must exist in society; and hence the knowledge of laws and government, and the science of rights and wrongs is necessary to the well being of individuals, families, and nations.

But do these things, even when they are all combined, and exist in the greatest perfection, meet the whole case of man? By no means.

Such knowledge is partial. Men may plough, and sow, prepare manufactures for exchange in foreign markets, know how to govern and balance the affairs of nations; and yet be sinners. The king on his throne may be a slave of sin, and a criminal before God.

Such knowledge is temporary. It relates only to the present life. Take that which is most esteemed. What is all the wisdom of the wise, the subtlety of statesmen, with all their grandeur and power, the moment they enter another world? Time, with all its exaggerated cares, is annihilated in eternity. On what subjects, think you, have the sages and disputants of Greece and Rome, the ancient conqueror Alexander, and the modern Napoleon, the statesmen and orators of our own senate, been dwelling, ever since they made their fearful launch into eternity? They have been stripped of all earthly greatness and attendants, and are alone with God, waiting for the general judgment. O vanity of the most important secular knowledge, which leaves man but half provided for as to this world, and wholly unfurnished for the next!

But now look at the adaptation and fulness of this most excellent knowledge, the knowledge of Christ. We feel that we have sinned, and may well be afraid of God; but we know that Christ was incarnated to bring us the message, that "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" so that we need fear no longer.—We feel that we are guilty, and can make no atonement; but we know now that an atonement is already made. Our sins were laid upon Jesus Christ; and he said, "It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." We are cut off from communion with God; but we may be restored to that high privilege by the sanctifying Spirit.—We are prone to evil; but the healing hand of our Saviour will restore us to perfect purity. We are liable to affliction; but we have the right to pray; and prayer secures to us supporting grace, and that Divine influence which renders even affliction a means of spiritual improvement. We must die; but Christ has the keys of hell and of death.—We shall be judged; but "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" We are immortal; but there is a place provided for us by the Lord; and where he is, in ineffable blessedness and glory, there shall we be for ever.

This is knowledge specially for *us*. The devils know, and believe, and tremble; but they have no part in this salvation. The angels also know; but they know only as spectators of the process of our salvation. "All are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

IV. A fourth mark of its excellence is its comprehensiveness.

The knowledge of Christ is not only light in itself, but it gives light to every thing beside. It is not a star, shining in surrounding darkness; but a sun, throwing rays of reflected glory on the whole scene.

He who knows Christ knows creation. Christianity connects creation with God as its author; and the man who knows Christ knows the end for which the universe was made. By the Son "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him," Col. i, 16.

He knows history. Human writers narrate the events; but he who knows Christ sees many a glorious scene, which the eye of the penetrating historian never contemplated. The call of Abraham, the wonders of Egypt and the wilderness, and the succession of ancient empires, all stand connected with the designs of Providence in regard to the

spiritual interests of mankind. The vast Roman empire was designed to be the wide and undisturbed field for the triumphs of the Gospel The voyage of Columbus, so fraught with interest when viewed in connection with commerce and the science of geography, had an ulterior object: it was intended to bring America into the Christian fold. Commerce and colonization are directed to the same end; and present many important objects to the view of the intelligent and benevolent believer, who possesses the knowledge of Christ.

The knowledge in question sheds a steady light upon moral questions. It discovers to us, in every respect, the will of God in regard to our entire spirit and conduct. And to know whether he pleases or displeases God, is a matter of the utmost importance to every human being.

It explains daily providence. Why am I thus? None can answer this question but he who connects all the events of life with correction, and the saving intents of Christ.

It carries light into the sepulchre. The wisdom of the world may walk amidst the receptacles of the dead, and say, "This is the end of man." He who knows Christ, triumphing in the majesty and power of his religion, exclaims, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead," Isaiah xxvi, 19.

V. The knowledge of Christ is sanctifying; and this circumstance illustrates its excellence.

Human knowledge is not sanctifying, but often polluting; and there is also a knowledge of Christ which leaves us in sin, and under condemnation. But this is not the knowledge of which the apostle speaks. It becomes requisite, therefore, for me to show you carefully what the true knowledge of Christ implies. If it be true, it leads to holiness. This is the great test. No man can know Christ, in a saving manner, till he knows himself. Of this knowledge the perfect law of God is the instrument. It discovers the depth of our depravity, and the extent of our guilt; and thus leads to the exercise of true repentance.—When the requirements and threatenings of the law are applied to the conscience by the convincing Spirit of God, the heart becomes broken and contrite; self confidence and self complacency are at an end; the man discovers his guilt and helplessness; the cloud of Divine wrath seems to thicken around him, and there is no way to escape the threatened vengeance. In this state he is prepared, in the spirit of humility, and with the simplicity of a little child, to receive Christ.—Believing in his Redeemer and Saviour with the heart unto righteousness, he knows for himself the power of his merit, and the strength of his grace to regenerate. Thus he becomes a holy man. "Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." "He that is born of God sinneth not; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Cleaving to the Saviour on whom he has believed, with full purpose of heart, he will know more of Christ; and his holiness will increase. He will see the length and breadth of Christian precepts; the extent of Christ's promises; the perfection of Christ's example; and he will become increasingly like him in all that is holy, benevolent, and just.

Would you, my brethren, possess this knowledge? You must count all things but loss that you may acquire it. When the mariners are overtaken in a storm, and the question is proposed whether every life shall be lost, or the cargo abandoned, they do not hesitate what choice to make. "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" and hence the valuable commodities with which the vessel is laden are all consigned to the great deep, in order to the preservation of life. To secure this, all things are accounted loss. In the same manner must we act, if we would gain the knowledge of Christ. Sinful pleasures, self righteousness, a worldly spirit, must all be abandoned, and Christ must be received in all his offices, especially as a Saviour from sin.

Considering the incalculable excellence of the knowledge of Christ, and its connection with the best interests of mankind, we perceive our obligations to assist in the diffusion of it in every possible way, and to the greatest extent. Let parents teach and recommend this knowledge to their children, the master to his servants, and every man to his neighbour. And while so many agencies are employed to give universal circulation to those blessed Scriptures which testify of Christ, and to send missionaries into all lands, to preach among the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ, let us bear our share in the holy enterprise; relying upon the Divine veracity and power for the ultimate success of our labours: for "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." While millions of mankind are actually "perishing for lack of" this "knowledge," let us incessantly pray that God would "send forth his light and truth;" that his "way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations."

Sermon XXXI.—*Glorying in the Cross.*

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," Galatians vi, 14.

Though the Gospel breathes nothing but peace and good will to men, it excites strong enmity against itself. All hell, all earth was moved to meet it with hostility at its first promulgation. The reason is, that its doctrines are contrary to the opinions of men; and its duties, to their habits; and pride, prejudice, love of sin, and hatred of goodness, were the leaders that organized the phalanx, and directed the war.

But the open enemies of religion are not its worst enemies. The most injurious are those of its own household. There has ever been in the Church a pretended friendship, more dangerous than open enmity. The most dangerous adversary is he who cries, "Hail, brother!" and smites him under the fifth rib; "Hail, Master!" and betrays him into the hands of his murderers.

This the apostles proved. Who had perverted the Galatian Church, and hindered them from running well? Heathen persecutors? No; but professed Christians; Judaizing teachers of Christianity. Had it been the only fault of these men to enjoin, through respect to lingering

prejudices, an observance of a few of the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, it would have been a fault of human weakness: but they denied the great doctrine of the sacrificial efficacy of Christ's death; and, by consequence, that vital truth of justification by faith in his blood.—They sought for that blessing by the observance of Mosaic rites; and enjoined circumcision upon Gentile converts, not only as a practice conciliatory to the Jews, but as initiatory into the Jewish Church, and as necessary to qualify the subjects of it to receive the benefit of the Levitical atonements. Hence they did not receive Christianity, but superinduced parts of it upon Judaism. They allowed Christ to be a prophet, the Messiah; they availed themselves of the perfection of his system in every thing that did not affect their distinguishing errors.—But it is plain that they destroyed all that was vital in Christianity; they rejected all that was fundamental; and consequently overturned the Churches which the apostle had planted, and rendered to all that followed them the death of Christ of none effect. Their great error was therefore the denial of the efficacy of Christ's death; and it was not an error of human frailty, but of unbelief. It amounted to a rejection of Christianity, and all its benefits.

To counteract these efforts, and to repair the evils they had done, St. Paul wrote this epistle; and, after many arguments, reproofs, and expostulations, he concludes it by recording, for the instruction of future ages, his own solemn avowal of the disputed doctrine,—the meritorious efficacy of the death of Christ for the justification of a sinner through faith. "God forbid," says he, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Though the cross of Christ be to the Greeks foolishness; though the Jews stumble at it; though false Christians compromise it, to avoid the odium that attends its avowal; though they blush to acknowledge a Saviour hanging on a tree, and to avow that his death is the true propitiation; God forbid that I should glory, save in this. This is the foundation of my hope; and this I will proclaim as the only foundation of the hope of the world.

That we have not misstated the apostle's meaning, in considering him to use the phrase, the cross of Christ, as a metonymy for the death of Christ, considered as a sacrifice, may appear from the absurdity of supposing the apostle to speak of his death merely as a martyr. Why this distinction, this eminence of notice? Why not glory in the death of Isaiah, or of John the Baptist? Why not glory in the saw which tore the one asunder, and the sword which decapitated the other?

But the meaning of the phrase is put beyond all doubt, by the expression, "the preaching of the cross." The apostles had no need to be anxious to make the manner of Christ's death known. That the Jews and Greeks did, and scoffed at the crucified Lord. But by this phrase the apostles meant the preaching of salvation through the meritorious sufferings of the cross. True, said they, it was an accursed death; but "he was made a curse for us." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." The apostles, in a word, viewed the cross as an altar; and the body of Christ as the sacrifice of expiation

The doctrine of the text is, that the death of Christ, as an expiatory sacrifice, is the glory of the true Christian. This is that great truth which there have been so many strenuous efforts in all ages to subvert. At first it was opposed by Jewish zealots, and by Gentile philosophers; and at present it is equally opposed by pharisaic speculatists in religion, who have no adequate views of the evil of sin, and the rights and honour of the Divine government. It is, however, the key stone of the Christian arch; and it therefore becomes us to hold it in its place. I am, indeed, persuaded that the more seriously we meditate upon it, he more satisfied we shall be that it is worthy to be the subject of our only boast, and of our only hope.

We shall first adduce reasons to justify our glorying in this doctrine and then improve the whole subject.

I. 1. We glory in the doctrine of the cross,—the justification of guilty men through a propitiatory sacrifice,—because of its antiquity.

Antiquity is no excuse for error. Its hoariness, like that of age, cannot of itself claim reverence. The oldness of an opinion is no proof of its truth. Perhaps error is coeval with truth, as the shadow with the substance. And yet this is certain, that no opinion which affects the foundations of a religion, or stands connected with a sinner's acceptance with God, can be true, if it be new; if it be not as old as the human race itself, considered as fallen creatures. The terms of man's acceptance must have been settled as soon as man fell; and as they were founded upon the unchanging and unchangeable holiness, justice, and mercy of God,—and the human condition, which needed such terms, has remained unchanged,—we can only be accepted now as men were accepted then.

The doctrine of the innocent dying for the guilty, and the guilty escaping through the death of the innocent, is shown in sacrifice. Sacrifices were offered in the first family; and in the primitive times were universal, wherever man was found on earth. Here is the very doctrine we teach. Salvation was sought not by works, but by sacrifice. This doctrine was taken up by the Mosaic dispensation. The Jews were not only called and made a separate people to preserve the doctrine of the unity of God; but also the great doctrine, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission; and to preserve the connection of the emblematical with the real sacrifice. We have the best authority for considering that, in the earliest ages, these sacrifices were prospective and emblematical. Abel offered a sacrifice in *faith*, says an infallible commentator, Heb. xi, 4. His faith could not be the mere confidence that his sacrifice should be accepted; for Cain had that, or why did he offer? The sacrifice which he offered referred to the atonement of Christ; and his faith had respect to the same object.

Why, then, was the cross of Christ "foolishness" to the Greeks, and "a stumbling block" to the Jews? Not because the general idea of propitiation was new; but because when the ancient patriarchal traditional religion of the Gentiles, and the revealed religion of the Jews, were both corrupted, the connection of sacrifice with a future Redeemer was lost. The offering of sacrifice was then no longer regarded as an act of faith, but of pure works, and even of human merit; and sacrifice was no longer considered to be figurative, but to be a rite which terminated in itself. It was not in the ancient world, until reli-

gion was corrupted, that the glorious doctrine of expiatory sacrifice was lost; and it was not till Christianity was corrupted in the modern world, that it was denied.

We glory in the antiquity of this doctrine. It was taught by patriarchs and prophets; the law of ceremonies was its grand hieroglyphical record; the first sacrifices were its types; the first awakened sinner, with his load of guilt, fell upon this rock, and was supported; and by the sacrifice of Christ shall the last saved sinner be raised to glory.

2. We glory in the doctrine of the cross, because it forms an important part of the revelation of the New Testament.

This is indeed our principal reason for boasting in it; for that which is revealed by God must be truth and goodness. Unless the doctrine had been revealed by God, its antiquity would have amounted to nothing. Had the New Testament been silent on the subject, we must have remained in doubt. Had it repealed the doctrine, we must have disregarded it. But to what page of the New Testament shall we turn in which we shall not behold it beaming forth with a brightness which must attract the attention? Is it in the narration of the evangelists? The minute manner in which the circumstances of Christ's death are noticed furnishes the strongest evidence that he died in conformity to former types. The death of Christ was an anticipated death. He was the end of the law.

Shall we consider the preaching of the apostles after his ascension? Then when the inspiring Spirit had taught them the great purposes of those scenes of love and grief which they had witnessed with so much amazement, they proclaimed the true nature of Christ's death. They declared that it took place by the fore-appointment of God, in pursuance of a grand plan of mercy, by which the Father gave his Son for sinful man. Christ himself, like the sacrifices of the Old Testament, was free from blemish; and like them, he was a sin offering. "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." His death was a price paid for redemption. He died in our stead; for "he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree." In a word, he was made "a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Not only did the apostles thus explicitly deliver the doctrine, but it had interwoven itself so fully into all their thinkings on matters of religion, that, when not speaking directly on the subject, their very phraseology is turned by it. Are the disciples spoken of collectedly? They are the Church purchased by his blood. Is their personal experience mentioned? They are justified by his blood; and they have redemption through his blood. Is their access to God in worship the subject of remark? It is entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Their sanctification is spoken of under the same terms. It is the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. And the doxology of the Church, offered up in her name by the last of the apostles, is, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever," Rev. i, 5, 6. If the apostles did not regard the death of Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice, the appointed means of our justification and sanctification, such phraseology is not to be reconciled to good taste, or to good sense; it is to

be explained by no figure of speech, no custom, no example; and it can only be saved from just censure by admitting that which alone can give it truth and propriety,—the atoning death of the Divine Saviour.

But the New Testament not only speaks this truth by the sermons and epistles of the apostles; it has also recorded it in a most solemn positive institution. The principal positive institutions of Christianity are two,—baptism and the Lord's Supper; and both of them seem to have a special reference to Christ. One of them holds up for ever his Divinity; his equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost. The other exhibits his priestly work; his atoning sacrifice. "By eating of this bread, and drinking of this cup, ye show forth the Lord's death till he come;" not as a historic fact; the history needed not this rite for its preservation. It was penned by Jews and heathens; in the malice of Jews, and the scoffs of Greeks. The Lord's Supper shows forth his death as the proof of his love, as the means of the life and salvation of the world; and is designed to hold it up as Moses held up the serpent in the wilderness, till the Lord shall come to judge the world.

The New Testament goes even farther. It closes with a book, which not only unfolds the future of time, but rends the veil which hides the invisible world from our sight. The same sacrificial ideas are carried even there. In heaven are angels, elders, spirits; glory, majesty, a throne; but the highest object, that which kindles heaven, and excites its loudest songs, is the "Lamb in the midst of the throne:" the "Lamb as it were newly slain."

We glory, therefore, in the doctrine of the cross, as the doctrine of heaven. It comes to us, indeed, stamped with the sentence of foolishness; but that is the sentence of man. God has declared that it is his wisdom and his power. From heaven he has in effect said, "This is the doctrine of truth and salvation: hear ye it."

3. We glory in the cross of Christ as affording the only sure ground of confidence to a penitent sinner.

Men are too generally indifferent to their moral state. Yet there are seasons in which all feel sin and danger; seasons of sickness and of calm and serious reflection; and in the minds of many persons a full discovery of their state is produced, by the word and Spirit of God.—Conviction is admitted; and the heart relents and is broken, and the spirit becomes contrite. We are willing to try the power of the doctrine of the cross by its effect upon such characters. There, then, is the weeping penitent; who shall comfort him? He feels his state of guilt and depravity. Is he a child? He has been unnaturally forgetful of his heavenly Father. Is he a subject of the eternal King? He has broken the law under which he was placed, and has subjected himself to the penalty. Has he received unnumbered mercies? Which of them has he improved, and for which of them has he been duly thankful? Is he an immortal spirit, formed for converse with God? He has never elevated himself to the great Author of his being, but has shunned his notice, and prostrated every power to lower aims. Is he a servant? He has neglected his work, and buried his talent. Is he on trial for eternity? He has forgotten his accountableness, and neglected all preparation for the day when none but the pure in heart, those who are free from sin, can see God. All this he feels. Now let his various comforters approach.

The world offers its pleasures; but he has no heart for them. Offer them to the sick. Can he sport in pleasure, when over him his conscious spirit sees, nay, feels, the searching eye of a frowning God?

Go to him, and say, "Why this excessive sorrow? You have committed no great crime. You are not so bad as others." Say this to him; and he will tell you that the conduct of others is no standard by which he is to be judged. He looks at the Divine purity, and feels that he is unclean; at the standard of his proper state and duty, and he is immensely below it.

Let another comforter approach, and descant upon the goodness of God; and the awakened sinner will answer, "I know that God is good; but that aggravates my offences. I have not been subdued by it; I have not loved the infinitely good and lovely." "But is goodness," should he ask, "the only attribute of God? Is he not just and holy?" what would that false comforter have to reply?

"But surely," says another, "God will accept your repentance."—"How do you know this?" says the penitent. "Does repentance prevent the execution of human laws? Does it turn away the anger of God in this life? If a man, by extravagance, squander away the property which Providence has given him, will his repentance induce God to prosper him again? When health has been ruined by intemperance, does repentance repair the injury that has been done, and secure length of days to the broken-hearted libertine?"

All these leave him without comfort. His sadness and his fears continue. One source of comfort, however, remains; and, if that fail, eternal darkness and despair settle round him. It is the cross. But that cannot fail. In no instance yet, in the case of a sincere penitent, has it failed. Does he want a proof of the love of God, not to innocent but to guilty man? It is there. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Is he afraid of the stern inflexible justice of God? Stern and inflexible it is; but then in those substituted sufferings of Christ it received full satisfaction. What then is wanting to his comfort? Here is the love of God displayed even to the guilty. He is guilty; and here is an atonement made to Divine justice for the sin of the world; and surely his sin is included. Nothing is wanting to his happiness but that personal trust, by which his fallen, guilty, and fearful spirit is committed into the hands of this divinely-appointed Saviour; and here is every circumstance to encourage it: the meek and inviting character of the incarnate God; his benevolent life; that calm compassionate majesty with which he gave himself to die, without resentment to those who caused his bitterest pains; the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and the solemn glorious act of death itself. Thus has he recommended himself to our faith. He dies for us to encourage us to trust in him. O yes; it is this that gives, first hope, and then confidence. The guilty approaches, wonders, and believes; and his sorrows flee away. Being justified by faith, he has peace with God; and rejoices in the blessing of reconciliation with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

We glory then in the doctrine of the cross. When preached to the broken in spirit it strikes hope into the deepest darkness of despair. It is life to the dead.

4. We glory in the cross because of its moral effects.

Here we shall not speak of many of those moral triumphs which surround the cross of Christ with a glory which neither philosophy, nor legislation, nor arts can presume to equal; the superstitions and idolatries it has destroyed, the barbarous nations it has civilized, the cruel customs it has abrogated, and the kindly influence it has shed upon the laws and manners of nations. We shall not now dwell upon its opposition to slavery and to war, and the manner in which it has regulated the relations of sovereign and subject, master and servant, husband and wife, parent and child; or upon its no less glorious triumphs over the selfishness of man in the thousand public charities of different kinds which it has created, and continued to our day. We shall principally regard its moral effects in individual human hearts when subjected to its influence. We do this the rather, because some of those who have acknowledged that the doctrines of atonement and mediation afford more hope to the guilty than any other scheme; yet have been inclined to admit that the natural effect of those doctrines is to give a license to transgression. What, then, is the true moral effect upon a penitent man who, by faith in the divinely-appointed sacrifice, has found pardon?

The first effect is, to produce in his soul the most ardent love to his God and Saviour. All other motives to love God are inferior to this. "We love him, because he first loved us;" and in this particular way, that he gave his life a ransom for us. We may and ought to love God as our creator and preserver; but when we have felt ourselves sinners, actually perishing, and have been saved from eternal ruin by such means, then every reflection upon the love of the Redeemer must excite the deepest gratitude and affection. Now, love is the fulfilling of the law; he that loves God must keep his commandments; and the cross, by most powerfully exciting this heavenly affection, most powerfully secures the surrender of the heart and life to the direction of God. It is so far from being the natural effect of the doctrine of the cross to produce laxity of morals, that the very condition of faith secures the full renewal of the soul in holiness; not faith in Christ merely as an atoning sacrifice, but as a Saviour, a Saviour from sin. Faith, too, is the grand realizing principle which gives to eternal scenes their full effect upon the spirit. This the apostle intimates in the words which stand connected with the text. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; whereby the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." The cross had not only opened to him the gate of present salvation, but the gate of heaven. It had thrown back the massy bars with which justice had secured it, and unfolded the scene of glory, honour, and immortality. Thus the world was crucified. It was, as it were, nailed to the cross, and destroyed by its instrumentality. It was as unattractive as a dead corpse. Its frowns were nothing; its smiles nothing; its pleasures nothing. They all appeared as nothing in the strong light of eternity. At the same time, St. Paul, by means of the cross, was crucified to the world. It might approach and flatter; but the principle on which either its threats, or flatteries, or pleasures could operate, was dead, crucified, destroyed, by the renewing power of Christ.

Another moral effect of the doctrine of the cross is benevolence.—

The Saviour died for perishing men; and from his death Christians have learned to pity the ignorant and the wicked. There the apostles learned to labour and die for the good of mankind; ministers, to wear out life in the service of the Church; and private Christians, to lay down their lives for the brethren. "I bear in my body," says the apostle, "the marks of the Lord Jesus." The cross has kindled a benevolence of which there had been no previous examples in the world, and called forth the most astonishing sacrifices and labours for the benefit of the human race. Thus, then, we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Let us attempt to derive some improvement from the whole.

1. Is there any person here, who, allured by the infidelity or semi-infidelity of the age, has denied or derided this doctrine? You are ashamed of the faith of your forefathers; and what do you glory in now? In your new rational discoveries? What effect have they upon your own mind, and upon society? Do they render you more devout in your spirit, more circumspect in your conduct, more active and zealous to promote the spiritual interests of mankind? Ah! throw away your broken reeds!

2. But I address more who hold and respect this doctrine. You believe that the redeeming God died for you, and ever lives to plead his meritorious passion in your behalf. And have you then been convinced of the evil of sin? Have you trusted in him for pardon? Have you loved him in return for so much mercy? Many of you still cherish the love of sin, and live under its power. Nor has your professed acknowledgment of Christ any practical influence upon your tempers and conduct. Out of thine own mouth will God judge thee, thou wicked servant! O the intolerable hell of the reflection, that you have slighted a Redeemer!

3. I grant that practically the doctrine of the cross is too often made to encourage indifference to religion. But this is an awful abuse of it; and I must therefore in faithfulness say, that it is not a Saviour upon the cross that will save you; but Christ living in you. Christ must dwell in your hearts by faith, subduing the evils of your nature, and producing in you the pure and heavenly mind that was in himself.—"He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Lastly, I recommend you to consider, that the grand practical effect we are to expect from the death of Christ, after we have received remission of sins through his blood, is to become crucified to the world; and that the world should be crucified to us. Happy state of those who yield to the full influence of the cross! You are dead to the world; and will not be troubled by the solicitations of worldly men. There is nothing in your tastes that corresponds with the pleasures to which they would allure you. Nor can you be much affected by a world when it is dead to you. You have higher and richer joys than any that it has to offer; and as to its sorrows, they can exert but little influence upon you, who see before you a world where there is neither sorrow nor pain, and who are looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of Christ.

Sermon XXXII.—*The Tree of Life.*

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Revelations ii, 7.

This is the first part of a message to the Church at Ephesus; and, like all the other messages sent to the Asiatic Churches, it consists of particulars which ought all to be of equal weight with us. Christ knows the works of his Churches. He marks what is amiss, and reproves it; he acknowledges what is good and holy, and declares his approbation of it. He excites to amendment by promises of pardon; and he animates to perseverance by the hope of eternal life.

In regard to the Churches in question, all these motives were disregarded; and those Churches are now sad monuments of disobedience. For some time, however, the evil was arrested; and we have every reason to believe that many individuals were corrected and saved. For our benefit it is written, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches;" and happy shall we be, if we be quickened to the consecration of ourselves to God, to vigilance, faith, and holiness. The result shall then indeed be happy; for our Lord himself says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

To this passage, the terms of which carry us back to the bright morning of our world, as well as forward into eternity, we proceed to direct your attention. The principal subject which it sets before us is "the tree of life." The expression is here used figuratively; and so as not to be fully understood without referring to the earliest transactions of almighty God with his creature man. Let us, therefore,

I. Consider the tree of life as exhibited in the primitive paradise.

The garden of Eden is not to be regarded merely as a place of delight and pleasure. The whole earth was so; and perhaps this was the especial character of the land of Eden, in which this garden was placed. But this garden was formed with peculiar care, adorned and enriched with an exuberant display of creative skill and goodness; and as it was the place where all the intercourse between God and man was carried on, it may be regarded, in reference to the whole earth, as what the holiest of all was to the entire temple. It was a kind of natural temple; a sacred enclosure. It had a religious character, and a hallowed designation. There Adam heard the sound of the Lord walking; a sure proof that he had heard that sound, and seen that presence, before; or he could not at once have recognized them: and thus, as in heaven he makes a sensible manifestation of his presence,—and did so in the sacred precincts of the Jewish temple,—in paradise he made a visible representation of himself to man, and held with newly-formed and unstained creatures an intercourse of condescending goodness; and, although they saw him face to face, they could feel no dread, so long as they knew no sin.

In this peculiar and consecrated spot was planted the tree of life; planted that its fruit might be eaten; and not prohibited, like that of the tree of knowledge. Yet it was not to be partaken of in the same man-

ner as the fruit of the other trees, which was appointed for food; since this tree was specially distinguished from them. The reason why it was called the tree of life, although not distinctly specified, cannot be mistaken. It was not so called because it afforded common food for the sustenance of life. Had this been the case, every tree which was allowed for food might as emphatically as this have been called a tree of life.

It has been suggested that it was a natural means appointed to counteract disease by medicinal virtue; and thus to prevent bodily decay and death. This is not an improbable hypothesis; but we have no authority for it; and, if we had, our inquiries would not be at an end. For this hypothesis relates only to the body; whereas we often find the tree of life spoken of in connection with the life of the soul,—not only with immortality on earth, but with immortality in heaven. Thus wisdom, heavenly wisdom, is called "a tree of life," with reference to the safety of the soul; and "the fruit of the righteous" is declared to be "a tree of life," with reference to its issue in another world. Thus also in the visions described by Ezekiel, of the glories of the Church on earth, and in those of St. John relating to the Church in heaven, "the tree of life" stands as a conspicuous object in the scenes of grandeur and beauty which each unfolds; and therefore as closely connected with ideas of spiritual life here, and eternal life hereafter.

It is not, therefore, without reason, that many eminent divines have considered this tree as a constant pledge to Adam of a higher life; and since there was a covenant of works, the tenor of which was, "This do, and thou shalt live,"—and as we know that God has ever connected signs, seals, and sacraments with his covenants,—analogy may lead us to conclude that this tree was the matter of a sacrament, the eating of it a religious act; and that it was called "the tree of life," because it was not only a means of sustaining the immortality of the body, but the pledge of spiritual life here, and of a still higher and more glorious life in a future state, to which man might pass, not, indeed, by death, but by translation.

This will explain the reason why the fruit of that tree was prohibited after man had sinned. He had broken the covenant, and had no right now to eat of the sign, the sacrament, the pledge of immortality.—"Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken," Gen. iii, 22, 23. God resumed his promises, withdrew the sign of them, and now refused any assurance or token of his favour. So he drove out the man. Yet paradise remained, for some time, at least; some persons think until the flood: but whether it continued for a longer or for a shorter period, the Almighty placed at its entrance, to prevent access to the tree of life, "cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way." There the angry forms of God's messengers of justice frowned, there the emblem of his wrath, a fiery sword, flamed, to show that, on the ground of innocence and obedience, or even of mere mercy, man had no hope. That gate was shut and guarded; the pointed flame "turned *every* way."

II. Let us now consider another interesting subject,—the substitution of Christ for "the tree of life," to give hope to man as a sinner.

We see man, the sinner, expelled from the garden of Eden; all hope of receiving the pledge of mercy and kindness, by being allowed to eat of the tree of life, gone; and the way to that tree fearfully guarded.—But it is equally certain that he was not absolutely excluded from hope. The Judge passes sentence; but the Judge also gives a promise; and man is bidden to hope in another object, "the seed of the woman." That seed was henceforward to be his "tree of life." Hence we see that, although he was expelled from the presence of God, as manifested to man while innocent, there was still a presence of God vouchsafed to him, and that too bearing a most gracious character. This is indicated by the affecting words of Cain, "And from thy presence I shall be driven."

Thus there was a visible presence of God vouchsafed, either in some particular place, or occasionally but frequently manifested, or perhaps both, in the antediluvian world. Then it was placed in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple of Solomon; and it is more graciously and still more permanently exhibited to us in the person of Jesus Christ, where it rests for ever. Thus man was never without the visible presence of God, or God sensibly set forth before him, as the object of his worship and hope. Though man is a sinner, yet God has so dealt with him, and visibly appeared, as to assure him of his compassion, and to invite his return.

Here three things are to be specially remarked:

1. That this presence of God was always approached through sacrifice.

Cain speaks of that presence of the Lord from which he should be driven; and we therefore see that it was before that presence that the brothers brought their offerings. Abel's offering was a sacrifice, and was therefore accepted; Cain's was not, and therefore it was rejected.

It is only through an atonement that God can be gracious to sinful men; and it is only through an atonement that we can draw nigh to his presence. That the approach to this presence under the law was by sacrifice, is so obvious that it need scarcely be mentioned. Now, God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and we through his death draw near to God. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is a mild and tempered glory, because Christ has offered the propitiation; and we draw near with confidence, because we draw near by faith in his blood.

2. That it is this atonement which always keeps the way to God open, and safely accessible.

That it is thus open and accessible, is shown by the altered position of the cherubim. Before the portal of paradise, when man was expelled, they appeared as the flaming guardians of the gate of life, lest the guilty should approach. In the tabernacle of Moses they were pictured on the vail by the special command of God; but not in attitudes, or with any attributes, of terror. They were placed at each end of the mercy seat, overshadowing it with wings, looking upon it, at once adoring and admiring the wondrous displays of mercy in harmony with justice. No flaming sword is there. They are placed in the temple as witnesses of the wondrous grace of God, when he communed with men from the mercy seat.

What was then typified is now realized. If at the gate of paradise

the cherubim are seen affrighting man from the gate, and the tree of life; under the Gospel another ministry is assigned to them. Is the Saviour born? They sing his birth. Does he rise from the dead? They are the messengers of the glad tidings. Does a sinner repent? There is joy in heaven among the angels of God on his account. Are the apostles in prison? They open the doors, and tell them to "go and stand in the temple, and speak to the people all the words of this life." All things in heaven are reconciled to us in Christ; so that the angelic bands minister to us here, and will join in our songs hereafter.

3. That to eat and live is the term both of the covenant in paradise, and the new covenant of grace; but that the subject is changed.

To live in paradise, the fruit of the tree of life was eaten; but it was not a sacrifice. It was a pledge of life, but not through the death of a victim. There was then life without death. The flesh of Christ which he gives for the life of the world, and which we eat spiritually; this also is the pledge of life; but of life through death. Nor is the act of eating under the two covenants the same. One is expressive of the confidence of an innocent creature in the goodness and faithfulness of God never offended, promising life; the other of faith, properly speaking,—the trust of a guilty creature, of one who feels and acknowledges his guilt, in the rich and sovereign grace of God offended, and exercised through Christ alone. The way to the mercy seat is safe whenever there is this trust in free unmerited goodness; but if we go even there, without this, trusting in any thing beside, we go, in fact, to the gate which is guarded by the cherubim, and the "flaming sword turns every way." O fly from this angry portal! "My son," said Joshua, "give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." Say, "I have sinned." Let thy only advocate be the sprinkled blood; and thou shalt eat, and live for ever. But,

III. Our text calls our attention to the tree of life, "in the midst of the paradise of God."

1. The residence of the saints in another and a blissful state is called paradise.

The word is of Persian origin; and was used for richly and curiously planted gardens, filled with the most verdant and shady trees, and watered with fresh and copious streams. The climate of the east gave to such places a charm which was heightened by the real refreshment of body and of animal spirits which they ministered, and the contrast of barren sands and burning plains with which that part of the world abounded. The name was therefore naturally transferred to the original garden, and from that to the heavenly state. That state, indeed, exhausts all the metaphorical language that can be employed. In this book it is exhibited under ideas of magnificence and grandeur, as in the description of the city of God. The text describes it by a softer, but equally interesting, allusion: it is "the paradise of God;" that is, it is not an earthly paradise, but a heavenly one. Nor are we to take our views respecting it from any thing but the original paradise. Heaven is that paradise unspeakably heightened.

That, we have said, was a consecrated enclosure, a natural temple; and such is this. Soar to the city, and you will find "no temple therein." The whole is a temple, set apart for the noblest exercises of the intellect and the heart, the exercises of religion.

That was the place where God sensibly conversed with his creatures by occasional manifestations. In this the manifestations will be brighter, and they will be permanent; for we shall be "ever with the Lord."

There was no death in paradise; but death might enter; for the tempter was near, to deceive and destroy. "There shall be no more death" in the heavenly paradise; for it cannot enter. This is implied in "death and hades" being cast into the gulfs below. Death will reign for ever in one region; but will never enter the abodes of the blessed.

In paradise man was sinless, but liable to fall. Here there is not a sinless pair who might sin; but a sinless society, who never can sin, but who must grow in all the strength and graces of holiness for ever.

The heavenly paradise is a place of felicity. Could we remove from this world death, disease, age, infirmity, hatred, prejudice, ignorance, sin, the separation of friends, what a transformation should we witness! All this, and more, is done in the heavenly paradise; and upon its inhabitants and their blessedness is stamped the character of eternity.

2. The second representation is, that the tree of life is there; and that he that overcometh shall eat of it.

This is a figurative representation of Christ. He is there to give this immortal blessedness, and to sustain it; and thus the benefits of his death run on for ever. We take not the fruit of that tree indeed sacramentally. Covenants, as suited to a state of trial, are removed: and with them their seals and sacraments. We derive life from Christ there; but not through acts of confession, and faith in a sacrifice to be pleaded, as when we come to God for pardon. The tree represents Christ, to remind us that our life is from him; and the whole of our salvation shall be eternally ascribed to his dying love.

These are the views which the text opens to us. Who, then, shall enter this paradise? Who shall eat of this tree of life? Only he that overcometh. All our sins must be overcome, or they will overcome us. Errors must be vanquished, and the knowledge of the truth acquired. The spirit of the world, our own hearts, and Satan must be all overcome. See the conflict which lies before you. The prize is only for the conqueror.

Which of you will engage in the mighty combat, to be continued through life? If you refuse, you are excluded from the reward. If you "fight the good fight of faith," the prize is sure. Decision, prayer, self subjection, bearing the cross, and steady perseverance, are all required. Yet let the promise animate you. Be humble, be self diffident; but fear not. Greater is He that is for you, than all that are against you; and if you trust in him, this faith shall be your victory.

Sermon XXXIII.—*Rachel weeping for her Children.*

"In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not," Matthew ii, 18.

The occasion of these words was the slaughter of the infants by Herod; and, as when the captives were formerly collected in the neighbourhood to be led to Babylon, the Prophet Jeremiah, by a bold and striking figure, introduces Rachel, the mother of Benjamin, deploring the sufferings of her posterity; so here, the evangelist, deeply affected in recording these tragic scenes, brings forward again the wife of the patriarch, as a distracted mother, refusing all comfort, because of the sanguinary massacre of her children.

Few mothers have had to pour out their lamentations over scenes so violent as these; but many a Rachel has had to watch the slow progress of disease, withering the strength, and blighting the beauty of her offspring; and amidst deep maternal anguish has the dart of death done its abhorred work. And thus have countless infant graves been moistened by mothers' tears.

All this is natural, and, to a certain degree, allowable. But we may easily conceive of circumstances in which Rachel's grief, and the grief of any mother, might be deepened beyond all conception; so that, instead of admitting of assuagement, it might settle into a steady gloom, and permanent horror.

It would be so, were that horrid doctrine true which consigns a part, at least, of the infant race of man to a hopeless destruction. Would the assurance of that, Rachel, be any solace to thy rent feelings? Nay, but, however bitter thy lamentations, still would they fall far below the greatness of thy calamity.

But, as the common sense and common feeling of men have both joined to spurn away this monstrous opinion, so that but few have had the hardihood thus to blaspheme their Maker, so is it also satisfactory to us to be able to adduce so much evidence from holy Scripture, that what might otherwise have only been matter of anxious hope is converted into a delightful certainty.

This is a branch of revelation, O Rachel, that may well dry up thy tears, and turn thy lamentations into praise. It affords us, also, a view of the benevolence of the God whom we worship, which it may refresh our minds to contemplate.

In bringing, therefore, before you the Scriptural evidence for that interesting doctrine, the salvation of all who die in infancy, I shall have —since this is a question concerning the Divine administration—to call your attention,

I. To the Scriptural revelation of the benevolence of God.

God is love. Clearly is this revealed; the doctrine, therefore, may not be questioned. Now, as sustaining the character so briefly, yet so forcibly described, he must desire the happiness of all; and if, indeed, he has redeemed all, he must design and intend the salvation of all, so far as the honour of his attributes, and the great principles of

his moral government, are concerned. To the Divine benevolence we can assign no other limitations. Love seeks its object, delights in its felicity, pities it in misery, runs all risks, goes through all labours, to rescue it from danger. And, let it be repeated, with all the purity of a Divine affection, with all the infinitude of a Divine attribute, God is love.

II. Look at the justice of God.

We cannot conceive of this as a radically different attribute from justice among men. It consists in rendering to every one his due, according to established law. But law is a revelation of will, to a being capable of understanding it; and punishment is only threatened against such. Now, nothing can be clearer than that infants are not within the sphere of justice, thus considered. Of law they can know nothing: they cannot, therefore, be subject to its penalties.

We are not, indeed, to push this so far as to suppose that no innocent being may be exposed to temporary suffering. Such may suffer for the accomplishment of some great purpose of government, provided there be subsequent compensation, and that, upon the whole, the happiness of existence exceeds its suffering. But the eternal punishment of creatures not capable of sinning presents to you existence in nothing but misery, admits of no compensation, and is utterly irreconcilable with all our views and feelings of justice.

III. Look at the mercy of God.

By mercy, you always understand benevolence, pitying, and, if possible, relieving, the fallen, the miserable, the guilty; and no Scriptural doctrine is more firmly established than this, that the Lord God is "gracious and merciful," that "his mercy endureth for ever." Now, either all men are the objects of mercy, pity, and relief, or they are not. If you say they are not, then do you contradict the word of God, which plainly tells you that "his tender mercies are over all his works." But if mercy be indeed thus universal, then must provision be made for the salvation of all infants. We can easily conceive how adults may be the objects of mercy, and yet perish, because that mercy is rejected by them. But if mercy is only held out to infants, dying in infancy, on certain conditions, then is it no mercy to them, inasmuch as they are incapable of performing, or even understanding, them. Therefore, if mercy be universal, it must operate, as to them, independently of conditions for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and infallibly rescue them from all misery.

I might venture the whole argument on this; but I proceed,

IV. To illustrate the subject from that constitution of the Divine administration under which all are born.

Sentence of death was passed upon Adam, and upon all his posterity, considered seminally. The threatening had been, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now, it is obvious that a strict dispensation of law requires a rigid adherence to the very letter of the penalty, and therefore, in the case before us, would have admitted of no delay. But the fact is clear, that delay there was. In the full, literal sense of the penalty, in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit man did not die. Now, delay is not from strict law, but from interposing mercy. And thus, before a child is born, comes in the covenant of redeeming love, vouchsafed to man, and therefore to his posterity in him.

What, then, is the actual condition of children under this merciful administration? They are liable to bodily suffering and death, though innocent of actual transgression; but as this may be compensated to them in the life immortal, it is not contrary to the Divine justice, as we have already shown you. They have, it is true, a corrupt nature, but the healing power of grace is provided. There is in their case, too, it may be allowed, a liability to eternal death; but this is entirely conditional, and only takes effect on them as actual sinners, who have rejected the Divine mercy.

But this is the grand principle: "The free gift is come upon all men to justification of life." That justification is to be received by faith by all who are capable of believing; but is bestowed by a sovereign act of grace on those who die before they are capable of believing, or it would be no free gift to them.

V. The subject is farther illustrated by the interest which God has given children in the gracious institutions of his Church.

We have instances of this in the gracious covenants of circumcision and baptism. Speaking more properly, the covenant is the same, but its sign or seal has been changed. The covenant with Abraham was, in its greater part, spiritual. The merciful declaration to him was, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." He believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and circumcision was appointed as the seal of the righteousness which he had by faith, being yet uncircumcised. The covenant itself was, that God would be their God, that they should be justified by faith, and possess the "better country," that is, the heavenly Canaan. Into this covenant Abraham entered; and his seed after him were included. The covenant remains still the same; but the seal has undergone a change. That which circumcision was then, baptism is now, even the sign and seal of the new publication of the ancient covenant of redeeming mercy. That baptism is thus a sign and seal of the same covenant as that to which circumcision stood thus related, is directly proved by Galatians iii, 27, 29: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ," whether circumcised or not, "have put on Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

This not only proves that children may come into the evangelical covenant by baptism, because formerly, by God's own appointment, children came into the same covenant by circumcision, but likewise, that they are brought within gracious institutions, and consequently for gracious ends.

It is true that children cannot covenant for themselves; but there is an important sense in which they are said to enter into covenant, when others covenant for them. And that they are capable of this, is plain from the language of Moses: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your little ones, and your wives; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day," Deut. xxix, 10–13. Now, either this putting children into the covenant is an idle ceremony, (which it would be profane to assert,) or it is more. And if more, it respects the communication of some spiritual advantages. These are, that all such are the Lord's in a special sense, and entitled to the heavenly Canaan; that they are placed within the knowledge of the

covenant, so as that, in due time, they may be brought to a right understanding of it; that all who bring them stand bound to teach them that knowledge; that a portion of the grace of the covenant is imparted, previously, to prepare them for this teaching, and to give it a saving tendency; and that themselves are bound, their life being prolonged, having thus received the blessings of the covenant, carefully to observe all its injunctions.

But how does this doctrine bear on the salvation of infants? Plainly, thus: that all such children are eminently the Lord's—a part of his people; and this, without at all excluding the salvation of others, confers on these a relation still higher than the common one.

Farther, if those who are to live come under the grace of the covenant, to prepare them to receive the truths of the covenant, that so these truths may have, what otherwise they would not have, a saving tendency, then is there a principle of grace, a moral, preparatory change, given independently of their seeking it: and as to those who die, this principle of grace, doubtless, ripens into that entire fitness for a better world, which, removing the original stain, qualifies them for heaven. I do not think that children who live are properly regenerated in infancy: I have said that they have a principle of grace, designed to lead to a full, Scriptural regeneration in riper years. But as to those who die, doubtless God "cuts short his work," as he does in those adults whom he calls away almost immediately on their conversion to himself.

VI. But, lastly, the case is crowned by the words and conduct of Christ himself.

He was, indeed, a lover of children; not, indeed, of those of any of his disciples only, but, as evidently appears, indiscriminately.

In proof and illustration of this, let us take two passages of Scripture.

1. Mark x, 13–16. The passage speaks of young children, and of their parents or friends who brought them to Christ that he might touch them, that he might lay his hands on them, and so bless them. Hence, St. Matthew adds to "putting his hands on them," "that he should pray."

Look, then, at the encouragement which he gives to them who thus sought his blessing on their "young children." With his disciples, who would have forbidden their approach, he was much displeased; and not only gave the required permission, by saying, "Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not," but uttered likewise, as the ground of it, the memorable declaration, "For of such is the kingdom of God:" a declaration including, most certainly, those who resemble little children; but, for that very reason, likewise including little children themselves. "Of such is the kingdom of God." On this declaration he acted. "He took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them." Yes, brethren, he "blessed them." And the blessing of Christ is not a vain pronunciation of the words of benediction. His blessing is efficacious and rich. And with his own blessing "he blessed them."

2. Matthew xviii, 3–14. You here see the heavenly Prophet instructing his disciples not by word only, but, and chiefly, by parallel and example. He takes a young child, and placing him in the midst, tells

his disciples that they must "be converted, and become as little children," or that they could not "enter the kingdom of heaven." All that he says of the state of mind to which the disciples were to be brought must be applicable to the child, or the parallel fails, the example does not apply. Though the sense may sustain some modification, yet in either case is it substantially the same. Nor does he stop here. Still both declaring his love to "little children," as well as to his disciples, he pursues his discourse: "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me;" and continues the parallel between "these little ones," and such as believe in him. He warns his disciples of the danger of offending them;—casting a stumbling block before them; causing them to sin: and this, both as to children and disciples. Then, there is the reason which he gives for not despising either,—the special favour of God to both; "their angels," their disembodied spirits, "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." And though both belong by nature to a race, which, but for the mercy of God were, indeed, a lost race, yet he declares, "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." "Be careful, therefore," it is as though he had said, "that ye offend not, that ye cause not to sin, that ye put not in the way of destruction, those, whether children or disciples, whom the Son of man came to save." To the same point goes his illustrative parable of the wandering sheep, the conclusion of which he himself distinctly states to be, that, as it is not the wish of the owner of the sheep to lose even one of them, "even so," declares our Lord, "even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones," evidently referring, so to speak, both to the type and antitype, to the "little ones," as to age and stature; to the "little ones," in the estimation of the world; "that one of these little ones should perish." The child, the disciple, alike belong to his fold; it is not his will that either should perish; and to save both, because both are "by nature" lost, the Son of man came into the wilderness.

Having established the doctrine, take, in conclusion, a few remarks in improvement.

1. It is a delightful thought that so many of our race are saved.

Remember how many, how large a portion, of the human race die in what may be termed their childhood. How consoling the general consideration! How much more so to those who have themselves suffered the painful bereavement, and seen their darling ones withered ere the bud could even begin to expand, but to whose expansions hope looked forward in such delightful anticipations!

2. Hence, the impressive significance of the ordinance of infant baptism in a devout use of it.

Children, we have seen, are objects of Divine favour, and of redeeming grace. In baptism you have the sign and seal of the covenant, the recognition of the "free gift" which has "come upon all men unto justification of life," and, therefore, upon these children. What encouragement for parents, in thus dedicating their children to a covenant-keeping God! In the appointed seal of the covenant, they see the Divine faithfulness, and can, therefore, ask with confidence for every covenant blessing for their children as well as for themselves.

3. Learn, too, that as to those children who live, the grace given in infancy is but preparatory to farther instruction.

Thus was it the positive command of God, one of the primary and fundamental ones addressed to the Jews, that their children should be instructed, from the earliest dawn of reason, in the knowledge of "the law of the Lord." The things which they themselves had heard, and which were to be in their own hearts, they were to "teach diligently to their children." And so now: if your children die in their infancy, you surrender them to God; but if they live, this is your plain, your bounden duty, even to "train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

4. Learn to bless God for the hope you have as to children dying in infancy.

They are removed from earth; they bloom no longer in your own domestic enclosure. Heaven is the richer for your loss. Transplanted to Eden, they shall flourish there for ever. Let heaven be dearer to you for what was once yours here, but which God has removed. Feel deeply, that though they cannot come back to you, nor would you wish it, yet that you may go to them. Let the reflection not only encourage you under bereavement, but excite you to increasing spirituality and devotion.

5. I address myself for a moment to the young.

Young people, objects of the Divine mercy, once solemnly devoted to God, have you sinned against the grace once given you? Have you departed from the covenant to which you stand bound? Now you are able to reflect, does it seem a trifle to you whether you are the heirs of covenant blessings or not? Will you not have the Lord for your God? We invite you from the fascinations of the world. We invite you to the contest against the world, the flesh, and the devil, in which, engaging in the name and strength of God, you shall be "more than conquerors through him that hath loved you." To all the glorious results of victory we invite you. But we would impress you, too, with a sense of your danger. Much is given to you, and an account of much will, therefore, be required of you. If you put away the Lord from being your God, not only shall he not be unto you an everlasting satisfying portion, but you shall find to your deep sorrow, to your unavailing regret, that to those who thus forsake him, and depart from his covenant, He, even "our God is," for ever, "a consuming fire."

Sermon XXXIV.—*The Transfiguration of Christ.*

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them," Matthew xvii, 1, 2.

In the history of the life of Christ we notice a succession of scenes of abasement and grandeur, which, we can easily conceive, would hold the minds of the disciples in great perplexity; but which we know how to reconcile, as knowing that his abasement was voluntary, and that "he emptied himself," only to rise to a greater height of majesty.

Thus, he was born in a stable, but angels sang that humbler dwelling from the heavens which canopied the region honoured by so glorious

an advent. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, and the angels came there to minister to their Lord. Often did he hunger himself, and yet bread, increasing in his creative hand, fed multitudes. And here, in the passage before us, the Man despised and rejected, ridiculed for his pretensions to be the Messiah, only attended by the fishermen of Galilee, takes them up into a high mountain, and is transfigured before them.

All this strictly accords with the glorious fact that he was both God and man. How inexplicable is it upon every other theory! I see in the circumstances of the life of Jesus, as well as in the direct declarations of the sacred Scripture, that he is the Son of God; and, with Thomas, I fall at his feet, and cry, "My Lord and my God!"

The history to which our attention is here directed is so plain and circumstantial as to need little comment.

The mountain into which our Lord went up is, by tradition, said to be Tabor. Why he took with him only Peter, and James, and John, is without any explanation. They formed a company, sufficient, so far as number is concerned, to bear testimony to the fact, when the time should come for declaring it; and there might be other reasons not stated to us.

The transfiguration itself was not a change of the substance of our Lord, but a glory put on it for a time; for he remained afterward in the flesh, and had still to die. It was an intense beaming forth of the hidden glory of the only begotten, through the tabernacle in which he had enshrined it while he dwelt among us, so that it penetrated the pores of his very garments, and they became white and glistering.

The transfiguration was remarkable for the appearance of Moses and Elias. Both appeared in glory; that is, in a splendour similar to his own. Equally remarkable was their discourse: "They spake," says St. Luke, "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The disciples, the same evangelist tells us, were overpowered with sleep, not natural, but supernatural. They saw not the beginning of the vision, nor did they hear all the discourse; but they awoke to see the glory, and to recognize Moses and Elias. For the whole, perhaps, they were not yet prepared; but they saw enough and heard enough for the practical purposes designed to be answered. "They were sore afraid;" and yet felt that "it was good to be there." Such is the strange union of opposite feelings in heavenly visions while frail mortality lasts. Under the influence of this overwhelming feeling, Peter said, "If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias:" but "he wist not what he said." In this wandering of thought his heart had no share; though sometimes he savoured the things of men, yet not at that moment; "he wist not what he said," but his heart was still right, remaining as it did with his Master; and the presence of heavenly beings was his joy.

The final scene rises in majesty and impressiveness. "A bright cloud overshadowed them," the cloud of the Divine glory; "and they feared as they entered into the cloud." And there came forth "a voice out of the cloud," and it said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Thus was he marked out to them as their Prophet, Lord, and Saviour, whom they were to hear themselves, and whom alone they were to teach to others.

On this stupendous and yet delightful manifestation we now proceed to offer a few general remarks.

I. The transfiguration is to be considered as one of those solemn acts by which Christ was inducted into his office as the teacher and Saviour of the world.

Several other important truths are taught by it. They, however, are but subordinate; this is the principal. To this, therefore, our attention ought first to be directed.

All the old prophets were appointed by some special designation and call of God. But Christ, being at once the greatest of all prophets, and what no other prophet was, it was to be expected that his designation should be accompanied by circumstances which should mark this distinction and superiority. And so it was.

There was their frequency. The prophets were generally designated by one glorious appearance of Him who called them: thus was it with Moses, by the bush burning with fire; and with Isaiah, by the vision of the temple filled with the Divine presence and glory: but Christ, by a series of wonders, all tending to authorize, commission, and designate him as the revealer and Lord of the new dispensation. There was the multitude of angels proclaiming his birth, the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and the voice of the Father at his baptism; there was the voice from heaven in the hearing of the multitude, and that which from the bright cloud declared him to be the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased, and whom men were to hear; there was his glorious resurrection from the dead, declaring him to be the Son of God with power; and that wondrous ascension by which he "passed into the heavens," and, in the midst of heavenly glory, was exalted to the right hand of God, as man's Prince and Saviour.

Then there was the manner. The prophets had a glory conferred upon them, but to the Master belonged the greater glory as matter of right. The appointment of the prophets was often sublimely awful. Such was the voice from the bush to Moses in the solitudes of Horeb; such the vision to Isaiah of the temple and the seraphim; and such the appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels of vast circumference, to Ezekiel. But in this transaction of the transfiguration alone, the sublimity, the awful glory, rises far above the height of any other of these wondrous transactions. It breaks not as upon a man unexpectedly called and chosen. Christ, as conscious of his right, goes up to the mountain to receive the attestation, taking his disciples with him as witnesses. He calmly prepares for the honour, and, while the disciples were overcome with sleep, he prayed, "and as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and glistering." A glory was seen by others, as put on the face of Moses; but from him that glory shone forth, penetrating his very garments, evincing, that though for a time voluntarily obscured, yet was it his own, which he thus in part disclosed through the body in which he tabernacled among us. Moses and Elias, the chiefs of the law and the prophets, descend from heaven to do him honour. And, above all, the bright cloud of the Divine presence, filling the disciples with amazement and fear, but Christ with none; a sufficient proof that he was more than man; while the voice of God declares him to be, not a servant, but a Son, his own beloved Son, thus putting an eternal

distinction between men, and even angels, and himself. And that same voice commands, through the apostles, that the whole world should "hear him." Thus, seeing attested the character and mission of our Lord, with all the emphasis which this sublime scene is calculated to give, ought those solemn words to impress and direct our minds, "Hear ye him." Does man speak to you a doctrine different from his? Does the world, do your own hearts, address you in different language? The command still applies to you, "Hear ye him."

II. A second point of instruction arises out of the subject of the discourse held with Christ by Moses and Elias. "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

There is no ground for the opinion that these celestial inhabitants came to comfort the mind of our Lord, and prepare him for his approaching passion. Nothing is said to this effect; and when we do find him comforted, it is not by a departed saint, but by an angel. Nor does he seem then to have needed that aid, even as to his humanity. When he accepted the aid of a creature, there was the mysterious absence of God; but now, he was showing forth something of his own glory, and the Father was with him. That Moses and Elias appeared to comfort him, then, is but a conjecture, and that not a very probable one. The fact before us is, that "they spake of his decease;" and this, even were there nothing else, would sufficiently indicate that in the death of Christ there would be something special and peculiar. The mode of expression, indeed, shows this. The words are, taken literally, "Of his departure which he should fulfil in Jerusalem:" την εξοδον αυτου, ην εμελλε πληρουν εν Ιερουσαλημ. This mode of expression is used of the death of no other. It was a departure from life, which he had to fulfil. Death was laid upon him as a duty and debt, and he paid it. It was a part of the glorious work for which he came into the world, and he accomplished it. When the solemn hour approached, his language was, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It is not in this way that the common death of men is spoken of, nor even that of martyrs. His was sacrificial death, death appointed and accepted for sin; and that was its peculiarity.

The same fact, that there was in his death something special and emphatic, is indicated by the persons who conversed with him on these great and solemn subjects. Moses and Elias appeared in glory, and spake concerning these things.

We sometimes read of angels looking into these solemn facts and mysteries, but here we have the glorified saints of the Old-Testament Church; and well might they be interested in the subject. It was *all* to them, as it is *all* to us. They were saved in anticipation of this.—It was this which was to confirm the covenant by which they had been raised to glory; and this was to be the endless subject of their song, as it will be of ours. "It is finished," was the word which fixed for ever all the saints of the Old Testament in their blessedness, and opened the gate of the same glory to all the saints of the New.

Brethren, let that be the subject of our thought and converse here, which shall be the theme of heaven itself. Here all true theology begins, and here it only ends to begin again. It is in the sacrificial death of our Lord that we see our sin and danger, and our glorious remedy. Here we see God's own display of his wisdom and his grace. This

is the ground of our hope. From this proceeds our sanctification. This will lift up the veil from death, and open to us the gate of eternal life. He died that we might never die; he died that we might live for ever.

III. We remark on the confirmation which this event gave to the ancient prophetic dispensation.

This is the argument on which St. Peter dwells, in his second epistle: "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount," 2 Peter i, 17–19. He then adds, "We have the word of prophecy made more sure,"—confirmed, or established.

The transfiguration thus confirms and establishes the "word of prophecy," in several remarkable particulars.

The ancient prophets speak of the Messias in terms indicating a strange union of the extremes of debasement and glory. Very strikingly was this illustrated here. Who was more despised of men at that moment than himself? He goes up to "the holy mount," and receives from God "honour and glory."

The ancient dispensation was marked with special care as to the quality of the sacrifices to be offered to God. They were to be appointed of God, as to the kind; they were to be spotless and perfect, as to the individual; and thus they looked forward to the great Sacrifice, so appointed, and so perfect. Here we see the shadow giving place to the substance. The victim is distinctly marked out,—"This is my beloved Son." And, though brought into the light of the excellent glory, all light himself, and covered with the brightness of that bright cloud, yet the light "which maketh manifest," discovers no flaw in him, no spot: "In whom I am well pleased."

The doctrine of the prophets was that the Messiah should die for the sins of the people. The Jews, in the time of our Lord, had rejected the doctrine of their own sacred books, though it was so plainly written there that he was to be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." Here the doctrine is both illustrated and confirmed; for the disciples hear Moses and Elias conversing with him on the decease, the "departure," which he had to accomplish.

The law and the prophets were continually holding forth some "better thing" than themselves. To this they all give witness. Their prophecies of a glorious future, their fixing all hope upon one as yet unrevealed Personage, abundantly declare this. The Jews, indeed, of that age, held the contrary notion, that the law was perfect and eternal. See how they were refuted by this transaction. Moses had said, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you like unto me, and to him shall ye hearken,"—to him, and no longer to me. Elijah had restored the law only that its types and prophecies should fulfil their preparatory intention. Now both Moses and Elias converse with him, to show the harmony of the whole; and he being declared by the voice from heaven to be the supreme teacher, they surrender, as it were, their commissions into his hands, and then depart, leaving him the sole object on which the eye of the world should rest for ever.

The ancient dispensation was founded on the doctrine of the soul's

immortality, and of rewards and punishments in a future life. It had its doctrine both of a separate state, and of a resurrection. But still, though sufficient for faith and practice, the revelation of futurity was not full and clear. But here it is confirmed and made clear. In these scenes life and immortality burst upon us. Moses, a disembodied spirit, lives, and lives in glory. Elias, who was translated, so far, however, connects himself with the doctrine of the resurrection, as to show that the body may be transformed, and dwell in glory too. Both show that there is a reward for the righteous; both show that the knowledge of individuals is retained in heaven; both show that saints as well as angels may be ministering spirits; both show that the subject of the thoughts, songs, and converse of saints in heaven and earth is one, even the atoning death which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem.

The ancient prophets speak of an advent of Christ in glory. In their visions they sometimes beheld the Son of man arrayed with light, coming in majesty to judge the earth in righteousness. As yet, indeed, no such advent has taken place. But is the word of prophecy false? Behold it confirmed. "The heavens have received him until the restitution of all things;" but before he went, he gave some glimpses of that glory and majesty in which he shall come the second time.—"His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." True, it was again shrouded in the vestment of mortality; but does he not bear that splendour now? Say, Saul of Tarsus; for you saw it, and felt it, on the way to Damascus. Say, John in Patmos; for you saw "his countenance as the sun shining in his strength." O, if so bright when he revealed himself in mercy, what shall that brightness be when he comes to judgment! Yes; before thee, seated on thy great white throne, the earth and heaven shall flee away. None shall then behold thee with joy but thy disciples, strengthened to bear and to shout with exultation at the sight. "All the kindreds of the earth" beside "shall wail because of him."

If the prophetic word be thus confirmed, then are there two important lessons to be learned from the subject we have now been considering.

1. The first is from St. Peter. He says, "Whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

The application was, in the first instance, to the Jews, who were to compare these facts with the prophecies, "till the day should dawn, and the morning star arise in their hearts." But the words may likewise be applied to ourselves. This light shines first of all in the dark place of our hearts; shows us our errors and corruptness, our guilt and danger. But take heed to it. It is intended to usher in Christ, and the day of salvation. All other light is delusive.

2. The whole history is most encouraging to those who truly believe in Christ.

For see, how he shares his glory with his disciples. In the garden he left them. He spared them from sharing, even by their sympathy, in all his sufferings; but he takes them up into the mountain, and is transfigured before them. All this is to encourage us. Even the figurative language which he employed referred to this participation He is the vine, his people are the branches. And, without a figure, he plainly declares that they shall enter into the joy of their Lord; that where he is, there also shall his servants be: "Father, I will that

they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." What, then, if we suffer with him? Would you not rather suffer and reign with him, than joy with the world, and perish with it? When leaves the world its votaries? At death. It mocks you, and then abandons you for ever. When come you nearest to Christ? Then, when you die to be received to his glory. Be of good cheer: follow your Lord on earth, and where he now is, there also shall you be; for his own word hath spoken it.

Sermon XXXV.—*The Design of the Christian Ministry.*

Preached at Manchester, on his appointment to that circuit.

"Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for; I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" Acts x, 29.

These are the words of St. Peter to Cornelius, who, being divinely impelled, had sent for him to hear words by which he and his house might be saved. The whole case strongly illustrates the words of our Lord to Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." It was his honour to open that kingdom to the Gentiles; a door which, by the mercy of God, has never been shut; which stands open to us at this day; into which we may enter, and obtain the fulness of its blessings, and prove that there is now "no difference between Jew and Greek; but that the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon him."

There is a particular use which I intend, God willing, to make of the text, and which perhaps may have suggested itself to you, seeing that I have adopted it as the first on which I address you as one of your ministers and pastors. The circumstances under which the words were first spoken, and those in which we are placed, I grant, are widely different; but the sentiments implied in the text are of perpetual force and application; and may, by the Divine blessing, be equally profitable to me and to you. With Peter I may say, "I was sent" for by you; that is, by those who, under God, had the direction of your spiritual affairs. I had no particular reason for complying, except that your invitation was the first I received; your circuit appeared to present as promising a field of usefulness as any other; I trusted that there was in your invitation a providential indication of the place in which it might be the Divine pleasure to place me: "Therefore," I may say with the text, "came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for;" and now, having met you for the first time in the relation of your minister, "I ask for what intent ye have sent for me?" Nor do I press this question upon your thoughts as to myself only, but as to my honoured brethren in the ministry, who, like myself, have been freely sent for by you. Every rational action must have an end, an intent, a reason. That intent, or reason, may be good or bad; and the action, which is merely made rational by a cause, becomes either good or bad,

blamable or praiseworthy, by the lawfulness or unlawfulness of its reason.

To make the subject thus brought before you, then, to bear upon our edification, let us consider the reasons and intents under which a people ought to act when they seek the aid of ministers, in matters which relate to their salvation; and, that I may not distract your attention by too many particulars, I confine myself to four.

I. The first is a general one: the regard which in this act is to be had to your personal salvation.

The end of the ministry with which we are charged is the salvation of men. It is not the performance of ceremonies, nor the pronouncing of discourses. The forms and shadows of the Levitical priesthood have passed away; and disputation and laboured oratory have their places in the schools: our business is, to save ourselves, and them that hear us. Our ministry is therefore called "the ministry of reconciliation," and "the ministration of life."

It is in reference to this general end only that you can legitimately send for us. It is this that you, as well as we, are to keep in view in all our ministrations. Had we an eloquence which we have not, so that we could speak with the tongues of men and angels; had we a depth of learning which we do not profess, so that we could open to you many more mysteries than we shall ever attempt; yet this eloquence, if we had it, this learning, if we were endowed with it, would not in themselves be a reason why you should have sent for us. What is the harmony of periods, if all is to end in words? What are the researches of the study, if all is to terminate in the increase of your knowledge? The question with you is, how you may turn any talents with which God has endowed us to the account of your salvation. The question with us is, how we may employ them, so that of you whom God hath given to us we may lose nothing; but that all may be raised up at the last day to glory and immortality. With this "intent" you have sent for us, we trust; with this "intent," we trust, we are come. O then let us never forget it! Be it ours always to look at this with steady aim; yours, to strive, by our instrumentality, to press into the light, liberty, comfort, and full salvation of the Gospel.

II. The second "intent" for which only you can lawfully desire our ministry is, that you may be instructed in the truth.

Salvation and truth, the truth of the Gospel, are inseparably connected. He who desires to be assisted in his salvation by ministers must therefore desire to be assisted by them in coming fully to the knowledge of the truth. Cornelius was admonished to send for Peter, that he might "hear *words* of him." What words? words of Jewish tradition? words of Gentile philosophy? No; but, as it is afterward more largely stated, "words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved;" "the word of the truth of the Gospel."

Is it, then, my brethren, with this "intent" that you have sent for us, that you may hear this truth? I doubt not, you answer, "It is;" and I give you credit for desiring it. You have heard it already so fully and powerfully stated, that if you had not respected it, you would not have remained here; nor do I suppose that you wish from us a softer form of it. Yet, let it be remembered, that the truth we must teach will only be agreeable to you, as the natural enmity of your

hearts is conquered; and that what is unsanctified in you will place you under frequent temptations, if not openly, yet secretly, to wrestle with it.

You have sent for us, then, you say, to declare to you the truth; but have you considered the nature and extent of this truth? And can you bear it? For this truth has some formidable aspects. It is not all comprehended in the love of God to man, in the compassions of the Saviour, in the freeness of grace, in the beauty and comfort of virtue, in the sweet and attractive discoveries of a blessed immortality. Happy for us and for you, that on these all-important themes we are authorized to dwell; and that every thing else leads to, and is centred in these. We should not be ministers of the Gospel, of good news, without this. But there are other truths, necessary to give effect to these, and without which we should but display the beauties and glories of some distant scene, without opening your way to it. You might see the verdant hills, the fertile valleys, the bright and flowing streams, the peaceful dwellings, and abundance of the people; and yet be in the desert yourselves, panting with thirst, parched with heat, fainting with toil, and find no way into this land of rest and plenty. Can you bear the truths, then, which cut out a passage, so to speak, from your desert state, into the joys of God's salvation here, and into his glory hereafter?

Can you bear to be slain by the law; convinced of all, judged of all? Can you bear the ministry of the Baptist; the man girt about with a leathern girdle; expressing himself in the language of bold reproof; and declaring that "even now the axe is laid unto the root of the trees," and that "every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire?"

Can you bear to be told, that, virtuous as many of you may be, you must seek this salvation as sinners?

Can you bear to be told, that, if any man will be Christ's disciple, he must deny himself daily, and take up his cross, and follow his Lord wherever he may lead?

Can you bear to have it enforced upon you, "Be not conformed to this world?" And can you bear to be reminded that there must be no intermission in duty; that you must run with diligence the race set before you; and war a good warfare?

If you have sent for us for this "intent," that we should speak to you the whole truth, you will say, even when we bring these truths before you, as Cornelius did to Peter, "Thou hast done well that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." If these are not your intentions, we must remind you, that a partial exhibition of the truth can neither discharge us from guilt, nor profit you. May you therefore so "purify your souls by obeying the truth," that you may "know the truth, and the truth may make you free!"

III. The third reason and "intent," under which the services of ministers are to be sought, is the faithful and constant application and enforcement of truth.

In general it may be allowed that ministers ought to be better skilled in Divine knowledge than at least the majority of their hearers. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the

law at his mouth;" but it would be a great defect were it otherwise, were many of his hearers better informed in the science of divinity than himself, so that they had no need of him. In like manner it would be a false view, that the ministry is appointed to teach us constantly some new thing; and that if the preacher has only plain and obvious truth to present to his hearers, his work is done.

It is, on the contrary, no less important that we should apply and enforce known truth, than teach that which is yet unknown; and for this end the ministry was established. But as there is occasionally some misapprehension on this subject, I will offer you a few remarks upon it.

All the saving truths and leading duties of religion are soon taught, and easily apprehended; and were the ministry to terminate the moment they ceased to be new, it would speedily close; at least, as to our regular hearers. We may, indeed, present them in new lights; but substantially our sermons will contain but little which the majority of you have not already received.

If, then, the ministry is a perpetual institution, it must have other objects than the mere declaration of saving truth; and if it was divinely instituted, with reference to these objects it must be necessary to them. It is one of these objects to apply and enforce truth. You must be told, if you know these things, "Happy are ye, if ye do them." Your "minds must be stirred up by way of remembrance." You must be solemnly appealed to, and persuaded, and entreated.

We see the wisdom of this appointment. Consider that, as to conscience, it often sleeps, and needs another to awake it, or it would sleep on.

Remark our proneness to judge others. This we are all apt to do. We are continually trying them by the right standard, but neglect to apply it to ourselves. The ministry is appointed to oblige us to judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned at last.

We are liable to religious delusions; and we avoid those truths which would disturb us. The minister of Christ must declare the whole counsel of God; and the very truths you need are thus pressed upon you.

All sinful habits and passions raise a haze and mist about themselves, to conceal their own turpitude and danger; and it is for the Christian ministry to dispel that delusive atmosphere; to clear it by pouring upon it the full rays of bright and piercing truth, and to show you "the exceeding sinfulness of sin."

All temptation, too, places a bias on the judgment. Your temptation may be to sin. Then you only see the fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise. It is for the ministry here to come in, and to remind you that God hath said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Or your temptation may be to discouragement and unbelief; and then it is for us to call your attention to the great and precious promises which perhaps you have overlooked, and to fulfil the command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

I might enlarge; but these remarks are sufficient to show that the ministry is instituted with reference to the application of truth. Beside this, neither you nor we must forget that it is a Divine ordinance; that

God's blessing is promised with it; and that, whoever uses it as such shall, from the weakest instrument that he employs, derive spiritual and eternal good.

Is it then for this "intent" also that you have sent for us; that we may apply and enforce the truths you know? "Count us" not, then, "your enemies, if we tell you the truth." Suffer the word of our exhortation; try and prove it by the verity of the word of God. We wish not to have "dominion over your faith," but to be "helpers of your joy;" but in what our ministry agrees with that word, receive it in meekness, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe.

IV. Another reason and "intent" under which the services of ministers can only be Scripturally sought is the establishment, or when established, the continuance, of the ordinances and discipline of the Church of Christ.

St. Peter here opens the Church to the Gentiles. They come in; and this was their mercy and their privilege; and so it ought to be esteemed by us. For if we view the institution of a Christian Church in any place, must we not think it one of the most important institutions on earth? Its members are in special covenant with God; festivals and holy days, Sabbaths, and other great occasions, are observed and celebrated. Public assemblies are held; and in these the Divine presence is both promised and realized. Christian fellowship is also enjoyed. The members of the Church are knit together by a new affection,—the love of the brethren, and are fellow heirs of the grace of life. The Church is an association formed to make war upon sin and error. The people that compose it are companies of Israelites in the desert, going from strength to strength, till every one of them appears in Zion before God. Here families are brought to Mount Zion, and the city of the living God. The aged are comforted and strengthened; children are brought to Christ, and trained up for his service and kingdom; and servants, made free by the truth, "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things." In the Church there are holy rules of living and acting in force. Baptism is administered; and "by eating" of the sacramental "bread, and drinking of that cup," the followers of Christ "show forth his death till he come."

Did you send for us to maintain or subvert this beautiful order?—"To maintain it," I know you say. We rejoice to meet you on this ground. Well then, be co-workers with us, or the end will fail; and we are come to you in vain. Come out from the world, and enter into the door we open to you; and be the Lord's by an explicit profession. Forsake not our solemn assemblies and holy festivals. Cultivate toward each other this kind affection. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Remember the end of your association; walk worthy of it; and live to be useful. Let your families be present with you before the Lord in all the ordinances of his house. Walk by these rules of holy improvement, and daily mind the same thing.

My brethren, in conclusion let me remark,

1. That if you have proposed important ends in sending for us, these impose important duties upon us, which we cannot perform but by special assistance.

There is only one priest that is not encompassed with infirmity; and that is the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. We shall need your candour, and, above all, your prayers. We ask them. Deny us not. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."

2. Maintain the teachable spirit.

Except a man receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he cannot enter therein. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The light is there; come to the light and it will shine upon you. Ask heavenly wisdom, and it shall be given.

3. Finally, be "intent" upon growth and advancement in knowledge and piety.

Go on unto perfection; and in the diligent use of every ordinance of God make your calling and election sure. Then shall your sending, and our cheerful coming, be a matter of delightful reflection to us all; and they who sow, and they who reap, shall be glorified together.

SERMON XXXVI.—*The Song of the Redeemed.*

"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth," Rev. xiv, 3.

I DO not attempt to fix the date, or describe the detail of the application of this prophecy. That is a task more adapted to books than sermons. It is, however, one of the peculiarities of this blessed book, that, while it affords employment to the learned and professed expounder, it affords, by its general views, to the pious and contemplative reader, perhaps an equal degree of edification.

How strikingly is this vision introduced! In the preceding chapter, there is the vision of the beast; a darkening, persecuting, and destructive power. Dark, indeed, is the view which the earth here presents, and the darkest on earth is even in the Church itself. Its garments of lowly humility changed into the purple of imperial pride; its voice of praise, into words of blasphemy; its clear exhibition of truth, into delusive mystery; its worship of God, into superstition and idolatry; its heart of pitying charity, into the callous, fiery heart of persecuting bigotry. But the Christian was not left here, with this abrupt annihilation of all the prospects which in former times had animated his hopes, and swelled his heat with anticipated triumph. Even in the worst times, the work of God was carried on. Not only, if he continued to read, would he see that antichrist was to be humbled, and the truth of the Gospel finally triumphant, but that, even during the triumph of darkness, the great work of saving men should be still in progress; for the text is a vision of those who were saved during the dominion of the beast,—a vision of the faithful among the faithless, the virgins who had not defiled themselves with spiritual idolatry. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder: and I heard the voice of the harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne."

As the text relates to the salvation of men from earth to heaven, it has its important application to all times and to all people. We call your attention, then, to the sealed and glorified saints of Christ here mentioned.

I. I direct you to their character: they are "redeemed from the earth."

Redemption, in their case, was not merely virtual, but actual; not in price only, but also in power. It was a redemption carried into their personal experience. Such must ours be, or the price of our redemption has been paid for us in vain.

Behold in the text a beautiful exhibition of the progress and consummation of this actual, this experienced and felt, redemption. There is pardon, finely represented as implying submission to God, and acceptance and acknowledgment by him. The Father's name is written in their foreheads. He says of them, "They are my people;" they say to him, "Thou art our God."

There is confession of God before men. His name is said to be written in their foreheads; an allusion, most likely, to the marks which idolaters bore about them. They practised no unholy concealment; their religion was public, and declared at all hazards. Their very motto, the rule with them of every purpose and work, was, "God whose I am, and whom I serve."

They were undefiled. They were unspotted from the world, even its more prevalent errors; errors recommended by example, justified by sophistry, alluring by interest, and enforced by persecution. Brethren, do we keep ourselves undefiled from the evils of our own times? Every age has something peculiar to itself. Are we carefully avoiding the sins which mark that in which we live?

There is their obedience. This is impressively described by their following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Through the various paths of duty they follow as his example directs. Through the varied scenes of life's changing events, they follow as his providence guides. And when others fall off, and forsake him, these steadily refuse to go away.

They were guileless. There was no guile found in their mouth; no false doctrines to entrap men, and cause them to wander from the truth; no false means, no fraud and deceit, to accomplish their ends.

There is their completeness. They were without fault before God. Such was the power of Divine grace, such the nature and strength of the principles which it had implanted in them. Sanctified throughout, they were preserved blameless in spirit, soul, and body.

And there is their redemption from earth. They were redeemed from its corporate society, as the world. That remained; they were chosen out of it. They were redeemed from its cowardly and selfish principles, by which truth is sacrificed to ease and gain; whereas, these sacrificed ease and gain for truth. From its example; for, while the multitude were wandering after the beast, these were following the Lamb. From its pollutions; for they had been washed from their sins

by the blood of Him who loved them. From earth itself; for they are now before the throne. But this leads us,

II. To their place: "before the throne."

Let us contemplate this. If heaven were considered simply as the residence of God, then were heaven every where, for God is every where, and, in regard to his essence, not in any one place more than in another. Or, if heaven were only a consciousness of the Divine presence, then would every place be heaven to the faithful; for they dwell in God, and God in them. But heaven is a *place;* and there the throne of God is, in that bright and calm region above us, where Christ also sitteth. There his saints are congregated now; and to that centre of rest and mount of glory all wing their way from earth, until the appointed end shall come.

This place may well fix our attention, and awaken our desire, as the place of glorious vision, and of eternal security.

1. It is the place of glorious vision.

In some respects, a devout contemplation of the works of God brings us before his throne. We see his governing hand in the changes of nature, his Spirit in the wheels; but still, to us who are in the body confined to narrow glances, and superficial views, how small a part is known of either his works, or himself! So will an enlightened regard to general and particular providence bring us before the throne. And, as compared with the general and erring views of the careless, very glorious is this vision. The Lord is seen sitting upon the water floods, giving counsel to counsellors, directing the arm of warriors, taking the wise in their own craftiness, and making the wrath of man to praise him; while the agents themselves think nothing of him, and intend devices widely different from his. These secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him; but still, even as to them, how often does he draw a cloud before the face of his throne, both in reference to the Church, and the world, and the events of their own lives! How often transact his affairs behind a veil of darkness, command the submission of faith, and give no account of his matters!

The revealed subjects of the Christian dispensation bring us before the throne in a still more eminent sense. We pass, indeed, in this respect, from darkness to a light so marvellous, that it may well excite our wonder that still more is yet to be revealed. The very mysteries of the triune Godhead open; and we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in their mutual relations and offices. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Here shine justice, truth, and holiness, illustrated and honoured upon the cross. Here is long suffering, slow and reluctant to anger. Here, pitying, melting, seeking mercy. Here, power employed to redeem and restore. And here, condescension; for God first dwells with man, that man may be raised up to dwell with God.

Yet, after all this, visions more bright and ample await the glorified. These are indeed "before the throne." To them creation discloses her wide-spreading scenery, and is beheld in more splendid light, in more perfect arrangement. The most curious inquirer here is as the man in the deep valley, whose views are bounded by very narrow limits. But let him climb some Alpine summit, and beneath him the

forests wave, the cataract rushes, the valley sweeps, the chains of eternal mountains break away in distant lines, the plains stretch to the ocean, which rolls its waves till sea and sky seem blended. Thus different from any we can now have, will be the vision of the works of God, beheld from before the throne.

Divine Providence, considered as contemplated here, and as seen there, will present a difference equally striking. "What I do," said Jesus to a disciple, when performing a mysterious act, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Let me take this for my illustration. Christ was seen washing his disciples' feet. Well might this appear mysterious to Peter. "Thou art the Christ," he had himself confessed, "the Son of the living God." And yet he now saw him preparing to wash the feet of sinful men: the Lord in the character of servant, the greatest becoming as the least. On his part, it was a burst of honest feeling: "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." And so do our own feelings and judgments err, when we judge of our Lord's acts without knowing his reasons. "What I do thou knowest not;" not the reasons; "but thou shalt know." By this one mysterious act, what wonderful lessons are taught! That God should assume, not only manhood, but the form of a servant, for human redemption; that he should be emptied of all his glory; that he should do this that sin should be expiated, and man saved; that he should do this to teach all his disciples to serve the world, and be willing even to suffer for it, and, finally, that all pride and haughtiness should be expelled from their hearts; for so said he: "If I, then," your Lord and Master, "have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash each other's feet." If lessons and views thus great spring from one act, when its reasons are explained, what shall it be when all that we know not now, whether as to the world or ourselves, shall be interpreted with equal evidence! but for this we must cease to be on earth; we must be placed before the throne.

And what shall we say of Christianity? Glorious as it is, a fuller manifestation even of that is in reserve. As to Christ himself, it is now said, "Whom, having not seen, ye love;" whereas then, the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, and who shall lead his people to the fountains of living waters, shall be seen in the full light of "his own glory." As to the Church, we see the plan of the building, and the foundations traced; but we see not the completed temple. Before the throne we shall see that temple perfected, and filled with the Divine presence and glory. We now see the effects of Christianity only on a few; but then on the "great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues." As to ourselves, we know not what new capacity for God there may be in a soul set free from the body, much less in the soul united to its glorified and immortal body, which is a far higher state. And as to the Scriptures, if they now present to us so much that is delightful, how much more then, when all its history shall be made plain, all its prophecies be accurately accomplished, all its enigmas explained, all the "things" written by "our brother Paul," "hard to be understood," interpreted by him by whom Paul himself was inspired. All that now divides good men shall then be removed; and there shall be one judgment as well as one heart. This is put by the apostle in his own peculiar

manner. With all his inspiration, he speaks of himself as being in knowledge a child; as seeing through a glass darkly; but then, all the childish things of an imperfect state shall be done away, and we shall see as it were face to face. Glorious must be the vision; for God himself is the teacher of them who are before the throne. That heavenly city has no need of sun or moon, of no creature helps, however glorious, to the knowledge of the Divine mysteries. The office of patriarchs, prophets, apostles,—of Paul, Apollos, Cephas,—will then have ceased; "for the glory of God shall enlighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof."

2. And as it is the place of glorious vision, so likewise of eternal security.

The place of contest is this distant field of warfare. Here the enemy is marshalled, and a host encamps against us. Here the Christian must be armed from head to foot. The completeness of the armour shows the extent of the danger. All exposed as he is, the panoply of God must be taken to cover him. The rewards of victory are distributed from the throne of God; and before it they shall be eternally enjoyed. And this is indeed the crowning reward, that unfailing security shall rest upon all our blessings. Day is there, never succeeded by night. There is quiet, unbroken by alarm: the gates of the city are not shut by day or night. There is life, never to be quenched in death. For ever does the river flow from under the throne, and the tree of life feels no winter. Instead of the voice which now proclaims, "All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth;" another is now heard:—and mark the delightful and wondrous contrast!—"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

III. To the represented action I direct your attention.

1. "They sung."

Powerful emotions of joy seek for outward expression. This is one of the laws of our very nature. The expression will be suitable to the emotion. Grief pours forth its wailings; joy is heard in the modulations of verse, and the sweet swells and cadences of music. One reason for this is, that thus our joy may be social. The shout of one warrior animates another. The song of one labourer cheers another as well as himself, in their mutual toil. The song of victory in one part of the field stimulates the combatants, where the battle is yet doubtful; and the common chorus heightens the common triumph. In heaven all is social, all is action and reaction. There is song in heaven, because there is joy there; joy too strong to be confined to the heart. It must not only be felt, but sung; not only sung, but sung in united chorus, rising, till the voice is "as the voice of many waters, as the voice of a great thunder."

2. They sung "a new song."

Every deliverance experienced by the saints of God calls for a new song: how much more, therefore, this, the final deliverance from earth! Their salvation is completed, and they now sing, "To Him that loved

us, and hath washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and dominion for ever." Their song is new, as demanded by new blessings. John saw before the throne "a Lamb, as it had been newly slain." The phrase intimates that blessings for ever new will flow from the virtue of his atonement, and the manifestation of the Divine perfections by him. Nor shall the song be new as to individuals only, but as to the whole glorified Church. The Church, even upon earth, has ever sung the mercies and the judgments of God. At the passage of the Red Sea, the construction of the tabernacle, the opening of the temple, the people sung praises to God. As they went to their great festivals, they were found "coming to Zion with joy." So now. Every Sabbath hears the Church singing her psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And all heaven shall sing, when the millstone is cast into the waters, and antichrist is destoyed. And this song is new, because its great subject, Christ crucified, never waxes old. I appeal to yourselves. Yes, brethren, when human poets have put these subjects into their verse, and tuned them with human harmony, even then you have a new song. Who that knows the good will of God calls for new joys, a new Christ, a new salvation? Even here "the people of God are satisfied with his goodness;" how much more when heavenly poetry modulates the verse, and heavenly voices attune the lay!

3. They sung it "before the throne."

The glorious fruit of "the travail of his soul." Before "the living creatures;" angels, who now see their charge secure, after that benevolent anxiety which they would feel. Much as an angel knows, he knows not whether I shall be finally saved. "Before the elders;" the presbyters, ministers of the Church, who see, in souls redeemed from earth, both the fruit and reward of their past labours.

IV. The peculiarity of their employment. "No man could learn that song."

Not so much to the sound, the music, of the song, as to its subject, does this language refer; and such subjects only can be turned into song, as dwell in the very spirits of the redeemed.

1. There are remembered subjects.

The redeemed from earth recollect the hour when light broke in on their darkness. The wicked are children of darkness still. The one remember the exercises of the Divine mercy; the others never experienced them. The redeemed look back on the grace which enabled them to continue to the end in well doing. How fearful the recollections of the backslider, "who turned aside into his crooked ways, and is now led forth with the workers of iniquity!" The redeemed remember their triumph over death. The wicked were taken, not as victors, but as conquered slaves.

2. There are present subjects.

There is God; but he is a consuming fire;—Christ; but they rejected him;—his atoning sacrifice; but they counted the sanctifying blood of the covenant an unholy thing;—the Holy Spirit; but him they grieved, vexed, and quenched. The place in which the wicked dwell, as one of darkness and horror, the companions with whom their lot is cast, their own immortal nature, the eternity which stretches immeasurably before them, supply no subjects which can be uttered in song.

Weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, are the only sounds heard among them.

We must learn the song now, if we learn it at all. And for this we must learn our sin and danger;—the way of true faith in Christ, and of a holy walk with God;—the art of praising him in all things. Then, endure to the end. In this life our consciences must be purged from dead works, to serve the living God; the heart filled with all joy and peace in believing; our nature fully regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost; and a conscience void of offence, both toward God and man, strictly preserved. In this way only can we be prepared to take our place before the throne, and join for ever in the lofty songs of the redeemed.

SERMON XXXVII.—*The Sacrifice of Christ.*

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God," Hebrews ix, 14.

THE services of the law had a two-fold efficacy: one in themselves, and the other in virtue of their connection with what was infinitely higher than themselves,—the great event which they all typified,—the offering of the body of Christ. This offering was derived through them, and not from them; for the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. The Jewish sacrifices were arranged in the beautiful order of the sanctuary, to be studied by spiritual men. To them there was a revelation of the mystery; and their faith stretched beyond the shadow, and drew life from the substance.

It is not to this, their saving mediate efficacy, that the verse preceding the text refers; but to their ceremonial and national use. The blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, did sanctify; but it was only to the purifying of the flesh. It gave no right of approach to the tabernacle of God. It purified the unclean, so that they could join the congregation of Israel in their solemn services; and entitled the people to those outward and national blessings, which the temporal promises of that covenant assured to them. This kind of efficacy the apostle acknowledges; nor did he wish to undervalue it, since it placed them in the way of making even a higher and more spiritual use of their sacrifices and purifications, and going from the letter into the spirit of them. But then he argues from the less to the greater; and thus brings us to a conclusion in which we are all most deeply and joyfully interested: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The two points, then, to which our attention is directed by the text are, the special character, and the efficacy, of the Christian sacrifice.

1. The special character of the Christian sacrifice, the grand atonement on which we all rest, is, that it is not the blood of the inferior animals, as in the former dispensation; but the blood of Christ.

The infinitely superior value of this blood is the point to which our attention is called; and one or two preliminary remarks are necessary to enable us satisfactorily to approach the subject.

Wherever the rite of sacrifice was practised, a notion has prevailed of the relative value of the sacrifice presented. The purest views are found in the earliest ages; and there we find that the sacrificing of mean and worthless things was held to be an abomination; and that the sacrifices most acceptable were those of animals most valuable and useful to man, and those of the most harmless and innocent habits.

If sacrifice were, as some have supposed, a mere rite of confession; and to offer it was an expression and public acknowledgment that the offerer deserved punishment; this could not be accounted for; since one animal was just as emblematical as another.

The notion is to be traced to the original institution; and embodies the two leading views, that God could only be propitiated by that which had value, and that which was clean and innocent.

The notion of innocence is easily accounted for: sinfulness and impurity cannot atone for sinfulness and impurity; but whence the notion of value? To God no gift could be made. Infinite fulness could not be benefited. The obvious and the only reason then is, that sin forgiven, without an atonement made, would be contrary to God's most holy and just government; and that a valueless or trifling sacrifice would have the same effect as no atonement at all. It would not be requiring something from or in behalf of the offerer, which should be a consideration in respect of which sin might be forgiven. It would not be a demonstration, a showing of God's righteousness or justice, in maintaining his holy law. What value, then, in this sense, was there even in the most valuable animals? There was nothing adequate to the case. Animal sacrifices were only typical of that which had a real value, and which could therefore make a manifestation of the justice and holiness of God; as the innocence of animals was but typical of a real innocence; and both meet in the person of our adorable Lord. It is in the adequacy of our Lord's offering to declare the justice of God, at the same time that he remits sin, that its value consists; and it is on this point that the apostle fixes our attention. There was that in the offering of Christ which was not found in the sacrifices of the law; and its efficacy is proportioned to that difference.

Let us consider this subject.

1. It was the offering of a human being: and as the judicial infliction of death upon a man marks the commission of an offence which justice declares to be capital; so the death of Christ, considering him simply as a man, shows a justice in the visitation of sin, as much greater as human life is above the life of irrational animals.

2. He was an innocent and spotless man.

Here the value is heightened. It was not the case of one offender selected from many to be an example. He had no part in the offence. Not only was he not actually guilty, but he had no part in that federative and imputed guilt, connected with a transmitted moral taint, which we inherit from our connection with Adam. He was not in the loins of Adam; he never came under imputed condemnation. He allied himself to the race by assuming a body; but he was not of the race by natural descent; and so was in this respect holy, harmless, undefiled,

and separate from sinners. He put himself in our place; but by a most voluntary act; taking upon him the seed of Abraham.

3. But that which carries the value of the offering to its true height,—if we can call that height which is above all height,—is, that it was "the blood of Christ;" of the whole and undivided Christ, who was both God and man. For, though a Divine nature could not bleed and die, a Divine person could. This distinction is to be kept in mind: for, the person being one, the acts and sufferings of each nature are the acts and sufferings of the same person, and are spoken of interchangeably.

Hence it is that the apostle adds, so emphatically, "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." I am aware that some modern commentators apply this to the Holy Spirit; but the fathers and others, more properly, apply it to the Divine nature of our Lord; and in any other view the verse makes a very confused sense. The meaning obviously is, that Christ through, or by means of, his Divine nature,—here called the eternal Spirit, as in Rom. i, 4, "the Spirit of holiness,"—offered himself without spot to God. Nothing less than this could constitute that sacrificial oblation which should take away our sins. But it was done; Divine blood was shed to wash away our sins; and so to demonstrate the Divine justice, that we might escape its terrors.

It is this intimate and inseparable connection of the Divinity of our Lord, this hypostatical union, with his person and work, which gives to both that exclusive peculiarity which lays the foundation of our absolute faith; and it may be profitable to dwell a short time upon it.

It is this which invests his humanity with that Divine character; so that by virtue of the personal union we worship him, without idolatry, as God. Thomas touches his very flesh; and yet falls at his feet, and cries, "My Lord, and my God!"

It is this which gives to his teaching its absolute and immediate authority. The lips of the man do but speak the oracles of the enshrined Divinity within. In the prophets the stream of inspiration comes through the channel of holy men: in him it bursts from the fountain head of Divine and infinite wisdom itself.

It is this which gave that spotless and unstained clearness and perfection to his example. That example was indeed human, or it could have been no example to us; yet all rested upon the base of a higher nature; all was exalted and glorified by the latent Godhead; like some radiant cloud, softened to human gaze, but still deriving its splendour from the unapproachable light of the very sun which it veils.

It is this which gives their peculiar character to his miracles. Prophets and apostles wrought miracles in the name of a higher Lord; he wrought miracles in his own name. The "virtue" was in himself; and it flowed so that those who touched him lived.

It is this which gave to his ministrations a character possessed by none beside. He was not a mere publisher of the good news of pardon and salvation. He was a dispenser of these blessings. He forgave sin in his own right; and conferred at once a title to heaven, and a meetness for its enjoyments.

It is this which exhibits the peculiar lowliness and abasement of his humiliation; and explains the mysterious words, "Who though he was

rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

It is this which gave their mysterious depth to his sufferings. I enter not into the question whether the Divine nature could, by a voluntary act, suffer. That veil is not to be lifted up by mortal speculations. But those sufferings were such as no mere man could undergo.

> "That last mysterious agony;
> Those fainting pangs, that bloody sweat;"

that sorrow of a spirit which had no sin of its own to sorrow for; that recovery from such a struggle, so as to be able to go through his trial with calm dignity; those words of majesty, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again;" that power to dispense paradise to a fellow sufferer; that voice so loud after so many agonies; that dismissal of his spirit; that life from death, at the streaming forth of which the bodies of saints rose, and appeared in the holy city; all enforce from us the exclamation of the Roman officer, "Truly this *man* was the Son of God!" Thus he offered *himself* to God; and it was this that gave its special character to his sacrifice, and rendered it such a one as never before had been offered; and of a value so full and infinite, that it needs not to be offered again. By that "one oblation" he hath "obtained eternal redemption for us." Such is the foundation of our faith in *this* atonement. The blood by which the Church is purchased is the blood of God.

From the special character of the Christian sacrifice springs,

II. Its special efficacy. It cleanses not the flesh, but "purges the conscience from dead works, that we may serve the living God."

Two benefits are here marked as the foundation of, and leading to, all others.

1. The purification of the conscience.

The "dead works," here mentioned, are sins; and the guilt from which we are purified is in another place termed "the conscience of sins." Sins are "dead works," because they expose us to present condemnation, and finally to eternal death. By "conscience" here is meant inward perception of such works as are chargeable upon us, with fearful apprehensions of the death they bring. Such a "conscience of sins" every one has; yet the full evil of that state from which our Lord saves us is but partially known to any man.

The "conscience of sins" is, to feel separated from God, and to feel a dread of God. We give proof of this when we put him from our thoughts. This "conscience" withers every pleasure; it is a worm at the root of all our enjoyments. It binds us with the strong bond of the fear of death.

This state is more fully felt in an awakened soul. Though mixed with mercy, you recollect the terrors of that state.

It is more fully unfolded at death, when the attention is forcibly directed to the past life, and its consequences in eternity.

The impression will be still more overwhelming in judgment, when

the books will be opened, the secrets of the heart disclosed, and the sentence of condemnation be pronounced upon the unholy.

"Conscience of sins" is that which gives peculiar energy to the torments of hell, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Ask you the remedy for an evil conscience? It is to be found in the blood of Christ. By that blood the justice of God, as you have seen, is satisfied: you, therefore, may be pardoned. Mercy is proclaimed; you, therefore, shall be pardoned, on making a believing application to the appointed sacrifice. In order to this, repentance is given; not that repentance which consists merely in the fear of wrath, but the gracious softening of the heart; the disposition to mourn for having grieved your merciful and long-suffering God.

Faith is also given. Our trust in the blood of atonement is invited; and the power to exercise that trust is given. And when we thus actually believe in the Saviour, we receive the attestation of forgiveness; and fear gives place to filial love, and peace overflows the heart. Guilty terror entirely subsides; and the heart is "filled with all joy and peace in believing."

O that now, if you feel this "conscience of sins," accompanied by true penitence, I might be the instrument of encouraging your faith! The glory of our religion is, that it has comfort for you. Were you heathens, you might go to your pagan rites, and depart saying, "Miserable comforters are you all!" Were you Jews, the blood of bulls, and calves, and lambs would purify you, but only as to the flesh. Did you live after "the straitest sect of their religion," a Pharisee, like St. Paul, you would be "alive without the law; but when the commandment came, sin would revive, and you would die;" and then you would have "conscience of sins." Were you moralists, the more serious you were, and the more anxious to conform your spirit and conduct to the rule of right, the more you would be in bondage, aiming at that which you could not reach. And think you that you must remain mere penitents? Alas, repentance saves not from the guilt and misery of sin. Tears, which relieve all other sorrows, relieve not in this case. However deep may be our contrition, the "conscience of" unpardoned "sin" remains.

But on this sacrifice you are to trust in order to salvation. To encourage you to this, think of the Father's love. For He who demanded this satisfaction for sin, demanded it not from you, but from his Son. Think of the love of the Son. Can you doubt of that love while he is evidently set forth crucified before your eyes? Think of the value of this sacrifice. If you can conceive of any thing more valuable, then doubt the efficacy of this, and fear to trust. But think; can you conceive of a higher? You cannot. Then trust in it. Venture in the same vessel which has carried so many over the stormy waves which now surround you; and who shout to you from the shore beyond, and bid you trust, and not be afraid.

2. The second blessed consequence is, that we may "serve the living God."

There is the service of worship. We have free access to God, and our services are acceptable.

There is the service of obedience. We are delivered from the bondage of sin, and all our powers are consecrated to God.

Here see your privilege, believers. This is your high and holy calling. Aspire to the full enjoyment of all this salvation.

I wish to leave these impressions upon your minds :—

1. The infinite evil of sin. It could not be forgiven without a Divine atonement.

2. The awful character of Divine justice. In order to its satisfaction in regard to sinners, the incarnation and death of the Son of God were necessary. And what a death!

3. The fulness of the blessings purchased by this sacrifice. The salvation corresponds with the sacrifice by which it was purchased; and comprehends every spiritual blessing, both in time and eternity.

Sermon XXXVIII.—*The Man whose Name is the Branch.*

"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a Priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both," Zech. vi, 12, 13.

There is a difference between the manner in which the prophets, before and after the captivity, spoke of the Messiah; and that difference ought to be very carefully marked by us. That event, before its actual occurrence, was present to their minds as a great calamity. They paint it in the most affecting colours. They make it a type of the afflictions of the Church in all ages. The restoration, also, was present to their vision, and the subject of their joyful contemplation. Even that distant view of it which was afforded them rouses their prophetic anticipations, both of the final gathering of Israel, and the final glory of the Church. Still, it is true that all their hope centres in Messiah; and the noblest bursts of eloquence rush from their lips when only the thought of his advent, suggested often by apparently distant associations, occurs to their minds,—minds, in reference to this subject, all attention, and all excitement. To the prophets after the captivity, the invasion of the Babylonian armies, the destruction of their city and temple, and the very return of the Jews, were all past events. The fulfilling hand of the faithful Inspirer of foregoing predictions had swept them all aside; and nothing remained to turn their attention from that near approach of the Messiah of which they all speak in terms so remarkably explicit. One of them declares that the second house, so far inferior to the former in outward splendour, should yet exceed it in spiritual magnificence; for that the Desire of all nations should come, and the Lord would give peace there, and thus fill the house with glory. Another introduces his Messenger as going before his face, and declares that the Lord of the temple,—of that temple,—should come suddenly, and fulfil his own purposes. And thus is it in the passage before us. The prophet selects Joshua, the high priest, and makes him a living, visible type of Him who was to come so certainly into that very temple. He takes him, and puts crowns upon his head, to denote the union of king and priest in the

Messiah; and then cries, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts: behold the man whose name is the Branch."

How wonderful was the prophetic dispensation! What wondrous men were these prophets of the Most High! We speak of poets; but how they sink, when compared to the prophet! All that they possess,—susceptibility, selection, numbers, imagery,—he possesses too, and that in a depth and compass "above all Greek, above all Roman praise." We speak of the poet's eye; his piercing, ranging view of nature; and of the association between natural objects, and sentiments, and morals. But whither ranges the vision of the prophet? And with what does he connect the multiplied objects which nature throws around? They were indeed SEERS. They bring the seraphs before the throne, veiling their faces, and bending under the weight of the felicity of adoring love; and thus teach us the depths and glory of the Godhead, and that the highest employment of intellect is to meditate on God, and that the sum of rational bliss is the love of him. In the heavens, beaming with the sun, and glowing with the stars, they see the lofty powers of the earth, the mighty rulers of nations, in their different degrees of glory. In the eclipses which darken them, and the last elemental strife which shall shake them from their orbits, they see the overthrow of thrones, and the extinction of all human splendour. In storms, and earthquakes, and the rush of mighty waters, they see the irresistible sweep of the Divine vengeance, chasing the proudest rebels like the sheep of the wilderness, and hurling down the loftiest marks of human power; while the dawning light, the calm which sits enthroned on earth after the tempest, the buoyant clouds flitting across the vernal sky, and dropping fatness on the earth, the spring bubbling forth in the desert, smiling vales, and laughing fields, display to them, by images which at once enchant the imagination, and enlarge the heart, the refreshing, cheering blessings of Messiah's free and universal salvation. Christian poets have often well imitated them; and thus has the poet himself been raised above his natural level. But as for the poets of the world, what are all their associations of human passions, and merely human instincts and sentiments, with the imagery of nature, in comparison with these? Theirs was the true inspiration: it opened to them all the mystic ties and chains of sacred association; it gave a hallowed voice to all nature; it erected the whole universe into a system of spiritual types, and made it a pattern of things in the heavens, and of heavenly things in human bosoms: it did more; for it dispersed the obscurity of the future, and, as though invested with the character of omniscience, made the things that were not as though they were.

Among other types and figures of heavenly things which the Jewish prophets used, are personal types, of which the text is an example. Joshua and his fellows, Zech. iii, 8, are said to be "men wondered at;" that is, "men of wonder," signs, representative of Messiah. And here Joshua is expressly made the type of him who was both king and priest. This could not apply to Joshua himself. He was not a civil ruler. But crowns, mystical crowns, are put on his head: and the prophet thus makes him a "man to be wondered at." "Behold the man whose name is the Branch." And the two crowns, made of the silver and the gold, brought or sent as a present for the purpose of

building the temple, by the men of the captivity whose names are mentioned in a preceding verse, are hung up in the temple, as memorials of their piety and faith, and as memorials, too, of the certain approach of the kingly and sacerdotal Messiah.

To some of those interesting views of that Messiah, (for the future glories of whose reign we all wait,) as presented by the text, I direct your attention. We have,

I. The emphatic appellation given to Messiah,—the BRANCH.

The verb whence the word is derived signifies "to grow," "to sprout;" and is applied to the vegetation of the earth, especially to trees, some of which, in part decayed, and that to the very roots, will often send forth new shoots, which shall surpass, in greatness and fruitfulness, the original stock. In this view of the expression, as applied to Christ, it may be considered,

1. As eminently prophetical.

Isaiah says, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots," Isa. xi, 1. The stem of Jesse was decayed; and that royal house of David, once so glorious, was reduced to poverty. Mary, who was of this "house and lineage," was a poor maiden, without name, and without connections. But, at the time of its lowest depression, when royalty was no longer, and just before the period when all the tribes were confounded, and the royal house of David was to be no longer distinguished, then was it that the Branch, the Messiah, shot forth. After a life of suffering, he was exalted to "the throne of his father David;" and thus a Prince of that royal line is now "Prince of the kings of the earth." Who could foresee that but God? What could accomplish this, but "the zeal of the Lord of hosts." Scattered and peeled is the whole race of the Jews to this day; but one who was himself a Jew, a Son of David, is, by virtue of his mysterious birth, and his ineffable union with Deity, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

2. Christ is the BRANCH: this may likewise be considered as descriptive.

It is descriptive of his personal progress to glory and dominion. The loftiest tree was once a weak and pliant shoot; and the goodliest branch upon a stem was once only a bud. What, except by inspired men, could be augured of the babe of Bethlehem? What of him, who, to the eyes of the teachers of his country, the authorized interpreters of prophecy, had no form nor comeliness? Yet the plant which grew out of a dry soil became beautiful and glorious; the stone which the builders refused became the head of the corner. The glory, concealed for a while under the veil of his low condition, burst forth from the sepulchre at his resurrection, rapt him up to heaven at his glorious ascension, and brought before the throne on which he then seated himself the prostrate hierarchy of heaven, and the host of the redeemed from earth, to worship at his footstool, hailing him as "the true God and eternal life."

It is descriptive of the progress of his religion in the world. That religion was a shoot from decayed Judea, once occupying a lofty rank among the nations of the earth, but, at the time of its first promulgation, conquered and enslaved. This alone was sufficient to establish a prejudice against it, both in Greece and Rome. Its earthly history was

the history of a man despised and crucified. Its teachers were unknown to fame; and their names, now never to be forgotten, were then never pronounced in the schools of earthly wisdom. It brought strange things to their ears, and, to them, things absurd and incredible. The sophist looked for subtle reasonings; the orator, for attuned periods; the populace, for mythological and monstrous fictions, for noisy festivals, and for polluting rites: but to no class did this new religion present any thing attractive. For a time it was, like its Author, despised and rejected of men. But the Branch grew; it grew in storms; and at length became beautiful and glorious. Its noble philosophy settled itself in the conviction of the loftiest intellects; while the voice of mercy which it uttered, the love of Christ which it proclaimed, spread gladness and hope through myriads of despairing men. Its morals checked the progress of social corruption; its benevolence broke the chain of the slave, and gave protection to the oppressed. Its manifested immortality controlled one world by the revealed solemnities of another. Paganism fell prostrate before it, like the Dagon of Philistia, and lay broken and mutilated on the very thresholds of the temples where it had been adored.

The term is descriptive of the work of Christ in the heart. How small often, and, to the eye of mere sense, how unpromising, is the commencement of that work which issues in that mighty, that unspeakable change, which makes even polluted man meet for a residence in heaven itself! A ray of light shall first dart into that gloom, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; a thrill of life, which a chilly, death-like habit of the affections scarcely perceives; a tendency toward God, almost instantly borne down by the attractions of earth. But the Branch is there, that which lives and springs; not his work only, but himself. There is the light which no darkness can resist; the mercy, which no guilt can turn aside; the power which no corruption can oppose.—When the sinner feels that all is vain without him; when he ceases from self, and honours his Saviour by his faith; then does the Branch of the Lord become beautiful and glorious in him. What honour is brought to the mercy which pardons such offence! What honour to his redeeming power, in saving the oppressed penitent from such enemies! What glory redounds to the grace which removes even the stains of hereditary pollution, cleanses the fountains of human nature, and inscribes on every motive, every affection, even on the whole man, thus claimed and set apart for himself, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!"

3. Christ is the BRANCH. The expression likewise indicates to us the secret and mysterious mode of his operations.

The metaphor is taken from vegetation; that process which leads us at once to that working of God in nature, which none can explain and yet the existence of which none can rationally deny; that stream of invisible influence which out of rude elements frames the stately tree, and from a bud developes the goodly branch. The mystery of both cases is resolved by this, that there is an unseen principle at work, and that principle the working of God himself.

We see this in the progress of our Saviour from sufferings to glory. All circumstances were overruled to fulfil prophecy, to display his perfect character, to bring out all the parts of his perfect teaching, to

render his sufferings sacrificial, to prepare and offer the great atonement, to demonstrate his resurrection, and to seat him in the perfection of all his offices at the right hand of the Most High. The secret working not only carried on its designs in spite of men, but made them, against their own intention, the instruments by which the Branch of the Lord became beautiful and glorious.

We see this, also, in the progress of his religion in our world. After all, one only thing can account for this, even the unseen power, the spring at the centre, the silent invigoration of the Holy Spirit. Tell me not of second causes. Add, at your pleasure, to the insidious list of Gibbon: make it much more perfect and copious. You plant your tree; you give it earth, and sun, and rain. But if earth, and sun, and rain could vegetate, you might vegetate a stone. The secret power, the living influence, must be superadded, or all is vain. Not all the evidence of miracles or prophecy, not the commanding reason, not the beauteous holiness of Christianity, could have given it currency in a world which hated it for its very truth and excellence. That evidence was seen and despised; that beauty beheld only to be abhorred; but the unseen Spirit, the breath of life, was there, the demonstration which addressed and reached the conscience; and it was received as a remedy when men were by the Spirit convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. It is this power which still carries on Christianity in the world, and in the hearts of men;—mysterious, we grant;—the wind bloweth where it listeth;—but certain and visible in its effects. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. And while that unseen principle is at work in our Churches and in our hearts, the work must go on, and every thing be made to contribute to its growth, however apparently stubborn and adverse. For, as the wondrous power of vegetation assimilates the rude earth into the organized substance of the tree, and extracts strength, and beauty, and fruit, from storms and rains, from the dark vapour and snows of winter, as well as from the mild air and fostering sun; so, while God shall mightily work in us by his Spirit, all temptations, all afflictions, all hostility, shall be made to unite with more favouring circumstances, in carrying into vigour and maturity the purposes of redeeming mercy in the soul of every believer, and in every land where God has planted his Churches.

II. Leaving this instructive metaphor, the prophet proceeds to the great work to which the Messiah was appointed. "He shall build the temple of the Lord." And, to render it more emphatic, he repeats, "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord."

This, too, is applied figuratively, but most appropriately, to the great work of public as well as of private piety, in which Zechariah, Joshua, and the leaders of the Jews were employed. They had to rebuild their city,—that was patriotism; but they had to re-edify their temple,—and that was piety, without which patriotism is a vain and empty name. In this state of things, the prophecy was mercifully adapted to answer a two-fold purpose. It encouraged them in their work, by assuring them that it should be completed, notwithstanding all opposition; and it taught them that Messiah himself was to be the great temple builder, and to erect that glorious and spiritual house, of which both the old and the new temples were the expressive types.

It is not here my intention to run a parallel between the temple, and

the spiritual house of God, the Church, and every believer, who is. also, the temple of God, instructive as such a parallel may in itself be I know that man was originally the temple of God; and that the human soul, since the fall, presents its broken pillars and beauteous fragments, mingled with the rubbish of its decayed condition, and that they lie as sad mementos of what was once glorious and hallowed. I know that it is the work of grace to re-edify, and again to consecrate, the temple to the Lord; but I leave the parallel, that I may fix your attention upon one great and comprehensive idea. A temple of God implies the residence of God with man; and the great object of Messiah's manifestation was to bring back God to the soul of man, that thus every man might be called God's temple. Thus he is called "Immanuel, God with us." Thus did he "ascend on high, and receive gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them." So the apostle prays, as for every believer, "that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith." Let us, then, direct our thoughts for a moment to this stupendous work of the great Builder of the temple of God.

Need I prove to you that man, in his fallen state, is without the conscious presence of God? And, should you require this, need I do more than remind you of your own sad experience? Of thoughts busied about every trifle, but never fixed on God? Of affections, alive to every thing on earth, dead to God? Of deep desires, of passionate attachments, of eager pursuings, of anticipating hopes, not one of which ever stretched beyond the narrow circle of the creatures, ever fixed itself on God, the sum of all excellence? Need I do more than remind you of the presence of evils in the heart, so earthly, so corrupt, so tumultuous, that their very presence alone is the demonstration that God is absent; for with these his peace and purity, his light and sanctity, can never dwell? Or, need I but remind you of that void of soul which you have all felt,—that conscious want of strength, and peace, and sufficiency,—a feeling which exists in no soul of man, no angelic spirit, when God is present,—God, who is the stay and the fulness of souls? It is enough that you are void of God; and this is the state of every man. But He, the man whose name is the Branch, even he shall build the temple of the Lord; he shall bring God to man, and fix his residence in the human spirit. This is the great end of his coming, not merely to give an inspired word, to set up the external form of a glorious Church, and to govern the world with reference to it, but to claim the heart of man, and fill it with his vital presence. He does this by making us sensible of the loss of God, and by fixing in us the fear of eternal loss, of everlasting separation; by exposing the vanity which surrounds us, the dark plunge into ruin before us; by exciting the desire after God, the effect of newly-returning life;—the language of the soul now is, "I go mourning after thee; I thirst after thee in a dry and barren land where no water is;"—by giving that seeking spirit which can rest in nothing but its proper object, God; God in Christ; God reconciled; God lifting up the light of his countenance; by showing us that only way to the Father, the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, he does this by inspiring faith: and then the work is done; the veil is removed, God shines forth, the temple is purged by the sprinkled blood, and filled by the hallowing Spirit. And mark what follows. Man walks with God, calls him Father, turns to seek

him in the soul, and finds him there. Now he delights in God; he finds how free is prayer, and how accepted is praise. What hasting to him for shelter! What a sacred fear of offending him! Man is now strong in Omnipotence, light in light, love in love, pure in purity, and satisfied in infinite fulness. "Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Thus is it that God returns to man; thus that the man whose name is the Branch builds the temple of God. And therefore the prophet adds, "And he shall bear the glory." This is his chief glory, and he shall bear it.—In many other ways, indeed, has he manifested his glory. It glows in every sun, and sparkles in every star; it spreads over the breadth of earth, it reaches to the depths of ocean, it is recorded in bright and exquisite characters on every individual object. Where shall we go not to behold some manifestations of the Divine glory? If we ascend up to heaven, it is there; for "the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof:" if to hell we descend, even there darkness becomes visible by the lightnings of the tempest of his wrath; for "Tophet is ordained of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." But here, here eminently, is the Saviour's glory,—the glory of a pity for man, expansive and bottomless as the infinite mind itself; of love, in all its wondrous manifestations in the incarnation, the humble life, the meek submission, the hallowed, sacrificial, redeeming death; of long suffering and patience with perverse hearts, still crying, "How shall I give thee up?" of exerted power, mysteriously combining with the freedom of human agency, touching and governing the adjusted powers of the soul, without destroying its moral nature; of healing, when all physicians have proved vain; of wonderful condescension, stooping to human thoughts and feelings, and dwelling with the poor and humble; of triumph over the enemies of man; over law, pleased to release its victims; over Satan, disappointed of his prey; over sin, expelled from his residence, and forced to let go his slave; over the world, the gaudy toys of which, and the appalling frowns, he alike trampled under foot; over death, for the shout of victory now swells over the universal victor; over hell, spoiled of its prey at the very gates; over the grave, by the glorious resurrection to eternal life.—This is his glory, and he bears it. The songs of the Church on earth, and of the redeemed in heaven, alike come up before the throne of God and the Lamb; and their delightful strain is, and always shall be, "To Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

III. We have the union of the kingly and priestly offices in Christ. "And he shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

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Sermon XXXIX.—*The final Deliverance of Believers.*

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," Rom. viii, 19–23.

This is justly reckoned a somewhat obscure text; but it will be found, on examination, sufficiently plain to afford us profitable subjects of meditation. The apostle is manifestly discoursing on the hope of true Christians; a hope which fixes on the glorious resurrection of the body as the period when that glorification is conferred, which marks the new and perfect state of man, in which he shall continue rising to higher and yet higher degrees of glory for ever. Now, the greatness and glory of this object of Christian hope he illustrates by strong contrasts: First, with the state of men generally, as "made subject to vanity," to the infirmities, diseases, afflictions, mortality of our present condition, so that one universal groan is heard from oppressed and suffering creation: and secondly, with that even of the saints themselves,—"not only they, but ourselves also,"—to whom, indeed, these calamities are mitigated; but yet they still press so heavily as to produce groans of desire, and mighty aspirings after the time when the load shall be thrown off. Such is the condition of the world, and of the saints separated from the world; and in opposition to these views of it, the apostle places the future hope of the Christian in highly expressive phraseology. It is a "deliverance from the bondage of corruption," a passing "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Behold, then, in this sublime passage,

I. The period when, as to true believers, this state of degradation and suffering shall give place to the full hope which the Gospel now sets before them: "the manifestation of the sons of God."

II. The characters under which this hope is presented,—"deliverance from the bondage of corruption," and admission "into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

III. The manner in which the whole subject is heightened by the reference which is made to the present suffering state of the world at large, and of true Christians while they sojourn in it.

I. On this point I shall only remark that it is the day of the second advent of Christ. This, indeed, will be, in some most important respects, a day of manifestation; the manifestation of Him whom the heavens have received; of a fearful array of judgment; of the crimes of men; of the long-delayed punishment of sinners; of that unutterable misery into which the impenitent shall be cast. But it shall be also the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God." The manifestation of those who shall then be acknowledged to be such; of their number, which now we possess not the means of calculating; of persons whom, perhaps, we never anticipated,—for many that are last shall be first,

and the first last; of their virtues, which the world slandered; and of that glory with which they shall be eternally invested.

II. 1. This period shall be one of "deliverance from the bondage of corruption;"—that mortality to which we are doomed, with all that it implies and involves; that sentence of death which binds us as with a chain, which is laid on us by an inevitable law.

See this bondage, this law of corruption, which brings with it all the frailties and miseries of mortality, in the weakness of the body. It has lost its strength and perfection; and all the contrivances of human skill to relieve its weariness, to aid its imbecility, to stimulate its slow and sluggish movements, to assist its various senses, are but the proofs that the law of frailty, the consequence of our corruption, is indeed binding upon us.

See this bondage in the diseases of the body. Why this prying into its anatomy, but to mitigate its sufferings? Why this study of the effects of plants and minerals, of air, of diet and regimen? Why these processes of chemistry? All confess that the law of corruption binds us; and that art can at most only relieve pain, and sometimes lessen the rapidity of decay; but that the inevitable decree is far beyond its control.

See this bondage in that moral corruption to which the natural corruption ministers. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Irregular appetites and passions "war against the soul," and often take it captive. So that till regenerating grace comes in, though you convince the judgment, yet is it again darkened in the hour of temptation. Arouse the fears, and again do the senses lull them to sleep. Nay, even gain the will, and you then hear the sad complaint, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

See this bondage in the manner in which this law sports with every feeling, every care, every interest; and thus proclaims the impotence of man, and its own power.

Look at youth. In that fair and transparent structure, in that active play of the limbs, in those rejoicing eyes, scarcely would you think that the law of corruption had entwined itself. Look again. The wind has passed over the flower, and it is gone. Rachel weeps for her children, and refuses to be comforted, because they are not.

Look at the interests which are connected with health and life. See, for instance, the father of a family called away in the midst of his years. Against this law all appeal is vain. The rent is made, the prop of the house is cast down, and its shattered fortunes proclaim the ruthlessness of the dominion under which man is doomed to dwell.

Look at the softer ties of domestic affection. There is the double effort, striving to detain and to be detained, and to arrest the dreaded law. But disease and death urge on their course, seize their captive, and sternly mock at the lacerated and agonizing feelings of the heart.

See this bondage as including all ranks. Warriors wither at the head of their armies. Kings fall from their thrones. The voice of those who can command or influence millions is stifled. Nor are the disregarded poor exempt. Grass and flower are cut down by the same scythe.

See it in the grave. There you see the law of corruption in its last triumphs. You see the dishonoured frame, which no power of man

can restore; the dreary prison of countless multitudes, whom no human power can release; the sleep from which no earthly voice can awaken; the darkness into which earth can reflect no light.

2. The contrast to this is what the apostle calls, "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

It is a liberty from the bondage itself, as resulting from the lapse of Adam; "for as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." From the grave; for Christ opens, and no man shuts. From the grossness of the body; for that which is sown a natural is raised a spiritual body. From irregular appetites, implying perfect liberty from sin. There shall be a governing soul, a tempered, obedient body. From affliction and suffering; for there shall be no more pain, no more chastening. From death. The first thought may be delightfully indulged, "I am now immortal; I have an eternity of blessedness in which to expatiate." And from all mortal scenes. All partake of the bliss which each one enjoys. The law of change and corruption is for ever repealed, and a felicity, pure and permanent, succeeds to it.

III. Let us notice the manner in which the whole subject is heightened.

1. The apostle refers to the groans and expectations, the "lookings forth," of the creature.

The terms "creature," and "the whole creation," or "every creature," mean not the whole universe of beings; for that would include angels, who are not "made subject to vanity," devils who have no "hope," and inanimate creatures, who are not capable of the "liberty of the children of God." They signify the whole race of fallen and unrecovered men. The apostle sees before him the multitudes of mankind. He marks their miseries, their groans, their struggles against their lot, their aspirations after a something unattained. He sees them still looking out for undefined good, clinging to life, unwilling to die. And how does he interpret all this? He resolves it into the strong and restless struggles of our high and immortal nature with this bondage of corruption; a powerful tendency to a good, which, though in fact unknown, is that same glorious liberty of which he speaks. How striking a thought is this! True, the object is not seen; yet, as a powerful intellect at its first dawn aspires after a knowledge of which as yet it has no conception; as an ambitious spirit tends upward to a height beyond its gaze; or still more illustratively, as a heathen in his ignorance feels after a God unknown, some higher and better, but yet mysterious, power, whose very name he has never been taught to pronounce; so will the soul of fallen man wrestle with its bondage, and strive for deliverance. It is a mighty power, though bound, and laden, and pressed; and it sighs, and heaves, and tends, though blindly, to the good which it has forfeited; that good which can alone be found in the glory, honour, and immortality of the deathless world. How elevated, then, the Christian's hope! It is the hope of mankind. The universal tendency and looking out of the countless multitudes which cover earth is toward it, even when they know it not; and while they spurn the holiness which leads to it, and prepares for its enjoyment, they are always sighing and groaning for it. Can that hope be set be-

fore us more impressively? But let us attend to some instances by which this wonderful truth may be illustrated. The key once given, the whole mystery of human condition may be unlocked, and opened to our view.

Man feels his miseries more sensibly than any other creature. And why? Not only because he reflects, which is itself a heightening of his distress, but because he has a consciousness that he possesses a capacity, both of entire exemption from suffering, and of full and perfect bliss. Toward this he is continually "looking forth," and is thus continually aware of the pressure of the load, for deliverance from which he groans. The very poignancy of his misery is therefore in proof of his aspirations after unmingled felicity.

Man carries his desires beyond the limits of any present enjoyment. Winged with desire, he hastens to an object; he obtains it; he stops; he finds it not sufficient, and hastens on to another. So we begin life; so we go through it. Onward, and onward still, beyond all that earth can supply. Ever repining, though in the midst of plenty. What, then, is the true philosophy of this? A distant, though unapprehended, good attracts us. A sort of instinctive eagerness urges the spirit forward. And the real truth is, that of all this dissatisfaction and restlessness, the principle is, an earnest "looking out" for a good which is nothing lower than that to be conferred at "the manifestation of the sons of God."

Man is displacent at the very vices which he indulges. Even separate from the dread of the "judgment to come," this is often the case And how are we to account for this? What an inconsistency is here. Pleasure in that which displeases! Is not the sensualist often disgusted by his bondage to the flesh? Is it not thus with the passionate, the malignant, the impatient, the covetous? Why is it so often a misery to the sinner to be alone, or to hear the truth? Why, but because the soul aspires for liberty from its moral corruption, feels itself bound by it in all its acts and habits, and degraded by the terrible thraldom.

Man struggles against disease and death. So, it is true, to a certain extent, do the inferior animals; but not as man does. What alarm at the approach, what horror at the certainty of death! What struggles for life, even in age and infirmity. Life is the object of most passionate desire, and death of equally strong aversion. "Skin for skin; and all that a man hath, will he give for his life." What is this but the struggle of our nature with the bondage of corruption? a nature aspiring to be ever free from disease and death, and agonizing to be delivered; a strong though secret tendency to a state like that which shall be enjoyed at "the manifestation of the sons of God."

Thus does the creature feel after the high and unknown good of immortality; and the sighs, and groans, and struggles of the whole creation do homage to the greatness and glory of that which the believer looks for in heaven at the coming of his Saviour.

2. The apostle refers us to another illustration of the greatness and glory of this hope. That for which the mass of fallen creatures tacitly and blindly sigh and long is the clear and revealed hope of the pious believer; and to this are all his longings directed. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even

we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

Mark the circumstance adverted to so emphatically: "which have the first fruits of the Spirit." Even this exempts not from the miseries of life; nor is there in them, however glorious they are, any thing which can fill and satisfy the vast desire of glory and immortality.

True, the soul is reconciled to God; but the bondage of corruption, and the burden of the flesh, still place them in circumstances of temptation. They may sin against God, and they long for the deliverance which shall make sin no longer possible.

True, the manifested presence of God is the delight of the soul; but even this, in its full extent, is veiled and hidden by the body, and still we say, "How small a part is known of him!"

True, there is, among these "first fruits of the Spirit," the glorious attainment of a regenerate nature; but how many imperfections yet remain! How imperfect our knowledge! How feeble our exertions!

True, there is the presence of heavenly graces; but these are like exotic plants; and an unfit soil prevents their full expansion, their fragrancy and fruitfulness. The cloud of sickness darkens sensible joys. In prayer, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Pain absorbs the attention; the affections are enfeebled by languor; age and infirmities shut us up in seclusion.

True, there is heavenly knowledge, and sacred converse with God; but the wants of the body demand supply; and hence, numberless cares and anxieties. Converse with God requires time; and the supply of present want occupies the far greater portion of it. And what is the most serious business of earth, but a sordid trifle, which reminds us of our degradation, of the bondage of corruption?

True, there is the communion of saints; but how far is this below actual communion with "the general assembly and Church of the first born?" And to what interruptions is not this exposed by human mortality! "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Where are the companions, or the guides, of your religious youth? Your Elijahs are gone up to heaven, and you see them no more; but another generation has sprung up around you.

True, religion strengthens your social affections, and heightens domestic enjoyments; but the binding law of corruption still rests on you and your house. From those whom you love you have been, or you must be, severed. Abraham has to bury his dead out of his sight.

True, you are saved from the fear of death; but still there is death, the last enemy, and the struggle with him. You must sink into his shadow, and lie in the grave as though you were conquered.

Thus do we "groan within ourselves," even though we have the hope which alone prevents our sinking in despair. But while groaning under the pressure of life's burdens, we are "waiting for the adoption;" admission into the perfected family, that dwells in "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and for "the redemption of the body;" the consummated redemption which is by our Lord Jesus; eternal deliverance from corruption, death, and the grave; the glorification of the body, and its establishment in the perfect and everlasting joys of heaven.

Sermon XL.—*The Altar of God.*

"Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy," Psalm xliii, 4.

The devotional spirit is the life of religion; and there never was a man of piety who was not a man of prayer. The principle of piety comes from God; and can only be maintained by intercourse with him.

Sweet, indeed, are the meditations of a devout mind upon God.—"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts," O Lord, "delight my soul." The sacred intercourses with God in the closet are fraught with the richest consolation to the spiritual worshipper. It is, however, in public ordinances that the finest emblem of heaven is exhibited; and in them we most directly prepare for it. We could not neglect them without vitiating and rendering nugatory every other means of grace, which derive their influence from the services of his house. Here God claims our public homage. The festivals and sacraments of his religion are to have a public celebration, honourable to his name. Here he fixes his special presence, and comes to us to bless us. To them our hearts will turn, if they are right with God, as the Jews to their temple; and under every new pressure, and on every new deliverance, we shall join with the pious, and say, "I will go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." The text opens to us two important views.

I. The peculiar nature of that worship which God has authorized. It is going to the altar of our God.

We ought all to be aware of the fact, that there is a peculiarity in the worship which God authorizes; for there is a worship which is utterly vain. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "Ye worship ye know not what: for salvation is of the Jews." That peculiarity is expressed in one word in the text; "I will go to the *altar* of God." By the altar only can God be approached. He will commune with us only from the sprinkled mercy seat. Behold, then, the true character of acceptable worship

1. There is in it a recognition of our sin.

When man was innocent, he needed no atonement. There was, therefore, no altar in paradise. No blood flowed there: there was no death, even by sacrifice. Man went directly to God, and needed no introduction by a Mediator. So when John beheld a vision of heaven, he "saw no temple therein." There man is perfectly restored; the mediation of Christ terminates; and "God is all in all."

But in the present state, in approaching God, we go to his altar.—This was the first object placed on the outside of the tabernacle, to meet the eye of every worshipper among the Jews; and the sacrifice of Christ is made particularly prominent in the Christian scheme, to remind us that we are sinful men, and cannot draw near to God in our own name. If you are innocent, you need no altar; if guilty, wo to you if you approach not by it. This important lesson was taught in the earliest ages of the world, when sacrifices were instituted, as a

means of access to God. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord;" acknowledging God merely as the God of providence, who supplies the temporal necessities of his dependent creatures. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof;" confessing his sin, believing in the promised Seed, and assenting to the great truth, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."

2. An acknowledgment of our just liability to punishment.

This also is declared by the altar. Worship is not a claim of right. Our right is death; for such is the sentence of the law. Nor is worship an appeal from the sentence; for the law is just; the fact of our guilt cannot be questioned; and God allows of no appeal from himself. True worship is purely a plea for mercy. "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the prayer of the publican whom God accepted and justified; while the Pharisee, who thanked God that he was "not like other men," was rejected, and "sent empty away." Sentence of death is denounced against every transgressor of the law of God; and in such a prayer as that of the publican its justice is acknowledged. The ancient offerer of sacrifice acknowledged this; and we do the same when we flee to Christ's atonement. This sentiment is strongly and justly expressed by the poet, in these impressive lines:—

"Guilty I stand before thy face;
On me I feel thy wrath abide:
'Tis just the sentence should take place;
'Tis just,—but O thy Son hath died!"

3. The true worship of God recognizes him as propitious through an atonement appointed by himself.

A mere sacrifice is not sufficient; for it might have been a human invention. It was not because sacrifice was presented by men, that any inference could be drawn as to the propitiousness of God. The institution of sacrifices was from him. It was not an altar of human device to which the psalmist resolved to go; but to the altar of his God. He hath set forth his Son as a propitiation; and our approach to his altar recognizes, not that God is gracious on the ground of prerogative; not from mere benevolence; but from a love regulated by justice, and which flows forth only when that is honoured. In a word, we acknowledge, if we worship God aright, that he is "a just God, and a Saviour." We own and adore justice, as well as mercy. But in true worship this recognition is not in doctrine merely, but in acts of faith. We flee for refuge there. The ancient offerer confessed his sins over the victim, and laid his hands upon its head. Atonement is for the penitent; and for him who by this imposition of his hands shuts out every other plea, and trusts his whole case to that. This significant act of the ancient offerer was finely expressive of our personal act of faith in "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." When we thus come to "the altar of God," our attention is fixed upon Christ, and our faith in his blood is called forth. The cross is "the altar of God;" his Son is the victim; the precious blood of Christ is the accepted atonement; and coming to him in faith, our sin is purged, and our persons are accepted.

4. Mark, finally, that our worship being an approach to the altar of God, we are assured of constant access to him.

Were it only that we could once approach, and gain a glimpse of his love in the pardon of our sins, as the pledge that we should see him in his glory, even this would be an unspeakable mercy, but far inferior to the case in which we are placed. See the type of our high privilege in the ancient temple. The priests had their courses, that there might be no intermission in the service. The fire of the altar was never extinct. The altar was always there to receive the sacrifice; and the altar of incense was an emblem of the acceptance of perpetual prayer. All this arrangement marks continuance. But the antitype rises above the type. The sacrifice of Christ needs never to be repeated. It was offered "once for all;" for "by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." Our High Priest never dies, but "hath obtained an unchangeable priesthood." The veil which concealed the holy place is rent and removed; access to the throne of grace is ever given; and our prayers are always accepted. See the largeness of the grant which was made under the old dispensation: "Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house: then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men;) that they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers," 2 Chron. vi, 29–31. This grant is not narrowed in regard to us. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, believing, ye shall receive." "Pray without ceasing." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Such, then, are the characters of acceptable worship. We proceed to consider,

II. The emphatic description which is given us of the joy which results from it. "I will go unto the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy."

A want of delight in the worship of God marks either a wicked or a vain mind; a mind dead to God, and to the noblest emotions of which the soul is capable. On the contrary, good men in every age have found this their chief pleasure. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

Contemplate the sources of this joy, that you may aspire after it.

1. The first is, that we are placed in the presence of a Being of infinite glory and perfection.

The joy in question supposes reconciliation with God; and when that is effected, all our intercourse with him may be adoring gratitude. Every thing that brings us near to God is infinitely important. We cannot approach the sublime of nature,—the wide and rolling ocean, the lofty mountain,—we cannot be brought into the presence of an elevated character,—without a deeply interested and joyous impression; but here God reveals himself to man. Infinite beauty, glory, purity, and perfection says, "Come up to me in the holy mount;" and in an

swer to our prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," he makes all his goodness pass before us. David anticipated this joy when he said, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," Psa. lxiii, 1, 2. And he who thus, by habitual devotedness, beholds God on his right hand shall not be moved.

2. A second source of this joy is the manner in which true worship enables us to appropriate this display of glory to ourselves.

There is an inexpressible emphasis in the word "my God." All his glory is ours. Is he the everlasting God? Then, because he lives, I shall live also. Is his fulness infinite? Then my supplies are secure. "All my springs are in thee." Is he omnipotent? Then, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Fills he heaven and earth with his presence? Then I need never mourn an absent God. Is he immutable? Then I turn from the changeful creature to him, and can never be disappointed. And whatever other perfections he has are mine. Mine is his wisdom, his mercy, and his love. The joy of apprehending God is joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3. It is the joy of confidence.

The very reason why we seek God is the want of confidence in every thing beside; and in him we may confide absolutely. God in Christ, we have seen, assures us of this. The philosopher tells me to span the heavens. I am an atom, a nothing. I look upon God incarnate, and all my chilling calculations fly. I am not unnoticed among his works. He came to this world, minify it as you may, to seek and to save that which was lost. He trod its soil, and participated in its toils and sufferings; he took our nature, he "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." The metaphysician reasons concerning God, till I am forbidden to think he can be touched with any feeling; I look to his incarnate Son, "the image of the invisible God," and the vain reasoning of man gives place to fact. Jesus wept in sympathy with the sisters of his deceased friend; and I now know how he can be touched with a feeling of our infirmity.

The wisdom of the world may speak of goodness; but when I go to the altar of my God, I see that God is more than goodness; that he is love; for what were the deepening scenes of my Lord's passion, but brightest scenes of love? What was his submission to be "led as a lamb to the slaughter?" What his agony and bloody sweat? Herein is love; and on love so demonstrated I build an infinite confidence. He that so loved me can never be indifferent to me, and can never forget me.

4. A fourth source of joy in going to the altar of our God is the renewed assurances of his favour to us.

In the bustle of the world we may not advert to this; but the languor of spirit is dissipated by waiting upon God. Doubts and fears may oppress and chill, till we steadfastly behold his beauty in the sanctuary, and by renewed acts of faith obtain richer manifestations of his love; when our peace flows like a river. Our minds are perplexed and discouraged by adverse providences; and, like the psalmist in similar circumstances, our steps well nigh slip, and we are ready to say, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."

After his example we go into the sanctuary of God; and there Divine light shines upon our minds. "I am continually with thee," he exclaims; and then adds, as the result of his own experience, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

5. There is the joy of hope.

The tabernacle was an emblem of heaven; and our Sabbaths, assemblies, and worship, are all calculated and designed to direct our thoughts to the period when we shall rest from the labours of earth, and join "the general assembly and Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven," and unite in their anthems for ever

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Sermon XLI.—*The right State of the Heart.*

"And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said unto him, Is thine heart right?" 2 Kings x, 15.

Whatever professions of kindness and friendship we receive from men, their whole value depends on their agreement with the sentiments of the heart. We admit this so uniformly, that there is nothing so detestable to us as insincerity. The most friendly smiles, the most engaging attentions, become the objects of aversion, when seen to be separated from the heart. When the base tinsel which had given currency to the counterfeit coin is worn off, we cast the piece away, notwithstanding the correctness of Cesar's image and superscription impressed on it, and hold its utterer as a deceiver and cheat Nothing is so thoroughly contemptible as hypocrisy, when once the mask falls off.

If we exact this sincerity from each other,—and this is what Jehu required from Jehonadab,—how much more strictly may we not expect that it should be required from us by the all-seeing God! He claims the heart in all its principles and feelings. "He searches the heart, and tries the reins." He regulates his present proceedings toward us by the state of our hearts, and by this will he judge us at the last day.

In looking out for some subject to bring before you which might promote your edification, I thought that nothing could be more important than the consideration of the state of the heart when it is right with God;—a consideration by which you may be put to the examination of your own. My brethren, enter with me very seriously into this subject. If our hearts be right, we shall thus have the satisfaction of ascertaining it; and if they be not right, there is yet a remedy, for the gate of mercy is not closed, and the means of salvation are yet in our power. Let us seek to know our own selves, resolving to rest in nothing which comes short of a heart right with God.

For the sake of order, I bring the subject before you under four general heads of discourse. If our hearts be right, they will be right,

I. With God.

II. With Christ.

III. With his Church.

IV. With themselves.

I. If the state of our hearts be right, then will they be right with God.

The greatest idea that can be presented to our mind is that of God. He is not a distant being, unconnected with us, unrelated to us. He it is "with whom we have to do." Such is the impressive language of Scripture. And then, the state of our hearts toward him must always be either right or wrong. Every sentiment we cherish contains in it as to him, some positive good or evil.

A heart truly right with God implies,

1. That we venerate him.

How little of this is expressed, or even felt, on earth! Yet in heaven, where all hearts are right, the seraphim veil their faces, and all living beings fall prostrate before his throne. When, therefore, we are conscious of his presence, when we walk as under his inspection, fear his displeasure more than the frowns of the world, and, bowing before his majesty with lowliness of mind, give unto him the honour due unto his name, then only are our hearts right with him.

2. That we entirely submit ourselves to him.

The very word "God," is a name of dominion; and never be it forgotten that he to whom it belongs has a supreme will concerning us. There cannot be a sadder spectacle than a heart wrestling with its Maker's will. "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" But when we recognize his will as our only rule; when we keep this before us as our supreme law, regarding it as the light and guide of our conduct; when we acknowledge his sovereignty in Providence, take our place in society as he appoints, submit to his dispensations, and in the greatest afflictions, even when nature agonizes, meekly bow like him in the garden, and say, "Not my will, but thine be done," then is our heart right with God.

3. That by the cultivation of a devotional spirit, we maintain a sacred intercourse with him.

Prayer and praise are the great instruments of the fellowship of our spirits with God; and illapses of light, and love, and moral power, are the returns which the condescension of God makes to them. Ever since created intelligences existed, to desire good from God, to receive supplies of it from himself, to be devoutly grateful, and to express their love, so far as it can be expressed in praises, has been the heaven of happy spirits. It is the heaven even of earth; the only one to be enjoyed, and which all may enjoy. How dead the heart which has no intercourse with heaven! True joy is a stranger there, and all is darkness and sin. Barren and unwatered, it bears no fruit of either righteousness or peace. So truly is this intercourse with God the state of a heart which is right with him, that no sooner do right principles begin their influence on it, than it moves toward him. "I will arise, and go to my Father," is its language. Then come confessions of sin, and approaches to God through a Mediator, and unutterable longings for the dawning light of his manifested favour. Then, "as the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants the soul after God. The soul thirsts for God, even for the living God." And thus the true rest of the spirit is found in that state only in which we can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

We ask, then, Is thine heart right with God? Does it venerate him? Submit to him? Aspire after him? You know the state of your own heart: answer these inquiries as before God.

II. If our hearts be right, they are right with Christ.

Till this be the case, the heart cannot even be right with God. Some have attempted, indeed, to produce a state of mind, reverential, submissive, and devotional, without respect to Christ; but the attempt has been vain. Something sentimental has been produced, perhaps, but nothing gracious. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." That our heart be right with Christ is, therefore, the foundation of all religion. It is so,

1. When it accepts his sacrifice as the only ground on which to claim the remission of sins.

How many hearts are there that are not, in this respect, right with Christ! One depends on his own virtues; another on his benevolence and charities; and more still, (for the heart will rest its hope somewhere,) upon some undefined, unscriptural view of God's mercy. Others, more enlightened, it is true, but still egregiously wrong, repose a sort of general trust in the merits of Christ; forgetting that this trust is the personal, specific act of a broken and contrite heart, which not only flees to that all-atoning sacrifice, but, despairing of all other help, eagerly embraces this. Brethren, a heart right with Christ in this respect has gone through the process of awakening, of arousing fears, of conviction of utter helplessness; and then surrenders its whole case to Christ, trusting solely in the merit of his death, and the power of his intercession; looking through them alone, and looking now for the mercy of God unto eternal life.

2. The heart is not right with Christ unless it loves him.

Considered abstractedly, all would pronounce it a thing monstrous, and almost a diabolical act, not to love the Saviour; and yet, sad as is this state of the heart, what can be more common? He stands before us arrayed in the perfection of virtue and holiness; and yet his character possesses no interest for us, as though it had no form nor comeliness that men should desire him as their example. He exhibits the tenderest benevolence; but what heart is moved by it, or shows forth its praise? Men are under an infinite obligation to him, for he died to save them; but this excites no gratitude. He holds out to them the blessings purchased by his blood, and they spurn them for every trifle. What a state of the heart is this! You see that it is wrong, awfully wrong. Yes, and it never can be right till it loves Christ supremely.

But let me caution you here. This love is not mere sentiment. It is not the mere effect which the contemplation of character, heroism, injury, suffering, may produce. It is the result of a personal experience of his benefits. He is loved as a Saviour. And it is a practical principle. It does not evaporate in feeling. He is loved above the world; that is renounced for his sake. He is loved above sin; that is mortified. He is loved above self; we are willing to labour, to suffer, and, if called, even to die for him.

3. When the heart is right with Christ, there is an habitual confidence in his intercession.

This is what is called the life of faith, or, living by faith; and it is

by this that the real is distinguished from the nominal believer. Faith is not one single act, but a constant reliance on the Saviour's mediation, as that which alone stands between the extreme of justice and ourselves, and by which we are looking for all good, for the supply of every want. Thus, when the heart is right with him, it rests not in acknowledging his merit, but draws its virtue from heaven. It is not satisfied with acknowledging a fulness of spiritual blessings to be in him, but derives them from him through its specific and habitual exercises. In this state, we surrender every care into his hands, and are kept in peace. We leave life and death at his disposal, satisfied with this, that whether in life or death we are the Lord's.

Is thine heart thus right with Christ? Dost thou thus believe in him? thus love him? thus habitually confide in him?

III. If our hearts be right, they are right with the Church of Christ

I mean by this expression, the whole company of his militant and professing people here on earth; the spiritual Israel of God. Now, when the heart is in a right state,

1. The Church is avowed.

There is the Church and the world; the one is renounced, the other embraced. Baptism is not of itself a sufficient avowal. We shall unite ourselves to some portion of the visible Church, and so place ourselves under its discipline. So of the Lord's Supper, which will be our public declaration of communion with Christ and his Church. Where this is not the case, the heart is not right. That which keeps us in the world is some bad principle which we will not renounce; some guilty shame which we will not cast off; some sinful association which we will not break; some evil practice which we will not amend.

2. Its members are loved.

A new sentiment is now awakened and cherished in obedience to the commandment of Scripture: "Love one another." And this is holy charity. There would be some peculiarities in the opinions and practices of Jehonadab; yet Jehu says to him, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? If it be, give me thine hand." Let me impress this on you, as well as a tender regard for those with whom we are more immediately connected. Remember, that the body is but one, and that it is "compacted by that which every joint supplieth."

3. When our heart is right with the Church, we feel that we are identified with it.

We grieve at its failures; in its successes we rejoice. We say, with the psalmist, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning." We pray for its prosperity, and say, "Peace be within thy walls." We are willing to labour in any part which the providence of God may assign to us, if we may but promote its interests.

Here, too, let me ask, "Is thine heart right?" Dost thou avow thyself a member of Christ's Church? love its members? identify thyself with its interests? and labour to promote them?

IV. If the heart be right, it will be right with itself.

There are strange oppositions and divisions in the heart; and this cannot be a right state of it. There is opposition between conviction and choice. Many know the good, who choose it not, who make no effort for its attainment. There is opposition between will and power. To will is indeed present with them, but how to perform they find not.

There is the struggle between the flesh and the spirit; the counteraction of graces by opposite evils. There is the stunted growth. The seed is at least so far choked, that there is no fruit unto perfection.—When it is thus with us, the heart is manifestly wrong. When it is right, it exerts an enlightened sway over the whole man: all its powers are in obedient order, all its graces fruitful and abundant. We therefore again ask, Is thine heart right with itself? Is it divided, and therefore faulty? or has God united it, that it may fear his name?

1. Perhaps our heart is wrong.

Let us be thankful that we perceive this. But be patient and persevering. Go to the very depth of its error and wrong. Heal not the wound slightly. The case may be hard; but it is not a hopeless one.

2. Perhaps it is in part right.

For this be thankful; but rest not here. Many evils have already given way. I see you laden with the spoils of some conquered enemies; more are nearly overthrown. O pursue the fugitives; seek them in their caves, and dens, and hiding places. Be determined on their final, their utter extirpation.

3. Know and use the means by which this may be accomplished.

Exercise faith in the Saviour, live in habitual watchfulness and self denial, "keeping the heart with all diligence, for that out of it are the issues of life."

O lovely sight, not only to men and angels, but to God also, even a heart renewed, stamped with the Divine image, warmed with the Divine life, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit! It is the temple of God, the glorious workmanship of Christ; and he shall exhibit it at the last day as the fruit of his passion, and the monument of his all-subduing, all-restoring grace.

Sermon XLII.—*The Inheritance of the Saints.*

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Colossians i, 12.

The darkness of paganism separated between this world and that which is future. It changed the character of earth, by making it the only hope and home of man; and thus left him no care beyond that of multiplying his present enjoyments.

What paganism did by its darkness, that worldliness does by its spirit. It shuts out another state. Nay, though alarms sometimes will arise, yet the infatuation again returns; and, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" becomes the sole care of man. For this he forfeits immortal life; and his last hour drags him unprepared to the seat of judgment.

What external Christianity effects in doctrine, inward and vital Christianity effects in the habit and tendencies of the mind. It connects time with eternity, and earth with heaven. Gladly does every true Christian confess himself to be a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth; "and they that say such things," observes the apostle, say them

in truth, and really feel, as well as profess, that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth; for they "declare plainly that they seek a country." They still seek it. Whatever advantages may be on earth, whatever their religious improvement and fellowship with God may be; still they seek a country. All things are subordinated to that; and they feel that they cannot, must not, rest until they attain it.

Such was the connection established between the hearts and lives of the first Christians, and a future world, by the glorious ministry of the apostles; and at the review of it the apostle gives thanks to the Father. Such is that connection of tendency, hope, and effort which may be established between us and the same immortality. Let us aim at the cultivation of it; and let the topics which our text contains be suffered to promote the great result in all our hearts. We have,

I. An interesting view of the future world, as it is inherited by believers: "The inheritance of the saints in light."

Various are the views of that glorious immortality which is exhibited to our faith and hope in the Gospel; and each of them is found in Scripture to have some special points of interest. That before us is full of delightful instruction. The saints in a better life are said to be "in light." They are so,

1. In respect to the place.

All representations of the heavenly world are calculated to excite our desire and admiration. It is a place of splendour. We may take this literally. Since the inhabitants are surrounded by material objects, light is not excluded. It arrays all nature with beauty; cheers it with vigour; and inspires it, so to speak, with feeling. But the term suggests the idea of ceaseless activity. Night and sleep are related to each other. The reason of night is the frailty of man, needing repose; but, when it is said, "No night is in heaven," that very expression indicates an activity which never wearies; a buoyancy of spirit which never grows languid; noble exercises which never cease; and an entire employment of time, even when eternity shall carry on its distinctions and divisions, if any, for ever.

2. The saints in heaven are in light as it respects purity.

Darkness is an emblem of sin; light, of holiness; and there is in this an affecting truth to nature. Evil covets darkness; it shuns detection; it covers itself with veils, often painted and shining, but veils still. It courts error, in order to stifle conscience, which will work when in the light. A soul panting after holiness comes to the light, that its deeds, if evil remains, may be reproved and corrected; and its works, if good, be manifested that they are wrought in God. The light of truth leads the way through every successive step of holiness.

Light may, therefore, well stand for holiness, the element from which it springs, and in which it delights. Into that light we are brought here, but often by a slow process through our own fault; and even to the end of life it is connected with infirmities; but in heaven the Church has neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. There thou shalt never sin through ignorance; nor fail of the perfection of duty through weakness; nor offend thy brother through mistake; nor be a stumbling block to others. All hearts there are open to each other as to God; and the perfect image of the supreme light of purity itself shall be fully and visibly reflected from every one.

3. They are in light in respect of the permanency of their felicity.

Night is an emblem of affliction; light, of gladness. Sorrow courts the gloom, which seems to sympathize with itself; joy expands in bright and cheerful skies; and even at night kindles up its imitative fires, and exults in their dazzling flames. Nor are the vicissitudes of day and night without their emblematical meaning in the present state Our blessings have their dawn, their noon, and their setting; our afflictions deepen from the dusk of evening to the gloom of midnight, and then the morning breaks with some new comfort. Such are the alternations of the present state; and there is not an earthly blessing which is not fading away, like the light of day, or upon which you have any more power than over that subtle element. But there the saints of God are in eternal light. No sickness blasts, no death devours; no families are broken up; no Rachel weeps for her children; no father exclaims, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" no injustice grinds; no tongue wounds, nor do losses grieve. And there, as to spiritual enjoyments, no depression of the body abates their ardour; no temptation throws a dark cloud before the sun of heavenly manifestations; no fears that "I shall one day fall by the hand of my enemy" chill the exultation of a past victory. They are in light. It is the permanency of holiness that gives permanency to bliss. Change is a part of corrective discipline. It is the dross that renders the purifying fire necessary; but when once purged, it shall shine in the lustre to which the great Refiner has raised it for ever.

4. They are in light as it respects knowledge.

We come, it is true, "out of darkness into marvellous light;" but still "we see through a glass darkly:" and we are sure that brighter discoveries are objects of hope, because St. Paul, after all his high illumination, anticipated with so much joy the removal of the dim medium, that he might "see face to face." In this respect we are not yet in the light. The illuminated circle about us is surrounded with haze. The prominent parts of things, like the tops of hills, catch the beams of the day which is breaking from eternity; while the valley and the distance lie hid in shade. Of many a mysterious individual providence we would know more; but the reason of the case is yet unexplained.

Into the mightier plans of God even piety would humbly pry; but though faith ascertains that they are "full of eyes," yet "the rings" are "so high" that they are "dreadful;" and their motions are complicated: "Their appearance and their work are as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel," Ezek. i, 15, 16, 18.

Into the difficulties of some great doctrines of revelation we are sometimes urged to look. We dare not question the truth of what God has revealed; and we adore the depth of the Divine counsels even when our minds fail adequately to comprehend them. We cannot see so far as angels into the mysteries of redemption; and yet these are "things" which we, as well as "the angels, desire to look into."

In this blessed book how many texts are obscure! Nay, is there one, the clearest, of which we see the full length, and breadth, and depth, and height?

Ah! who would not have the mystery of his little life unfolded, that he may know more fully the wisdom which has guided him; the love

which has watched over him; the unwearied but invisible hand which has restrained him from evil, and supplied all his wants?

Who would not see all prophecy converted into history? all the complexity of the world's government converted into one bright manifestation of wisdom, power, holiness, and goodness? Who would not see every page of this book brightening under his gaze? And, above all, who would not rise to a nearer vision of Him, the Eternal, the infinite Essence, the Source of all, the Perfection of all; "of whom are all things, by whom are all things," and to whom glory and honour are for ever due? This has been the crowning hope of good men in all ages. Job expressed a joyful assurance that in his flesh he should see God; and St. John exultingly exclaims, "We shall see him as he is." It shall be done. The saints are "in light." And,—to refer to the former illustration,—though now the light strikes only upon the prominent hills, and leaves the vale and the distance in darkness, breaking the connection and relation of things by interposing shadows; yet as the sun ascends, and shines down in brighter rays, the light sinks into every valley, dissolves every mist, and throws one vast scene before us, equally strong in its illumination, and combined and converted into one boundless harmony.

In the text we have,

II. The meetness which is wrought by God in the hearts of all who are raised to the enjoyment of this inheritance.

This meetness, or fitness, is expressed in two terms in the text. One is relative, and the other personal.

1. The relative meetness is expressed by the word, "inheritance." It is assigned to "heirs."

Our natural heirship is forfeited by sin. Redemption has brought back the inheritance; but we become heirs by becoming children; and we are made the children of God by the faith which secures to us the blessing of justification. Till this blessing is obtained, there is no meetness of relation. The inheritance is not mine, and I am forbidden to hope for it. If I die under the delusion of finding admission into heaven while my sin is unforgiven, I shall be awfully disappointed.—My name is not in the book of life till my guilt is cancelled, and my person adopted; for it is only when we are "justified by his grace that we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Where, then, is your evidence of this heirship? Is it within you, in the witness and fruit of the Spirit?

2. The second term indicates the personal meetness. It is the term "saints."

The word signifies hallowed, sanctified persons. Mark, my brethren, he correspondence, the fitness, between a hallowed state, and heaven. Shall I illustrate this by contrast? Dwell, then, for a moment upon it. Here is a man that has a distaste to God's service. It is a weariness to him. He avails himself of every pretext to neglect it; and, when he does engage in it, he is restless and unhappy. Is he meet to be employed in the worship of God day without night for ever? Would heaven to him be a place of rest and joy?

Here is another, who shuns the full light of truth lest he should be reproved. Can he go into that pure and searching element which shall set his secret sins in the full light of his countenance

for ever? Would he voluntarily choose such a place as "the lot of his inheritance?"

Here is a third. So enervated is his heart, that nothing spiritual or eternal lays hold upon a single affection. What shall meet the gross taste of this man in the spiritualities of that world of light?

Take a fourth. He is a trifling lover of pleasure, or a sensualist.

Take a fifth. He is cankered with envy, fumes in anger, lowers with revenge, swells with pride, or is contracted with selfishness. You see no meetness here. Let no man deceive himself. It cannot be that persons with these dispositions should have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Before I can enter that light i. must shine into my heart, to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Before I join that society, love and charity must ameliorate my temper. Before I enter upon those hallowed meditations, my meditation upon him must be sweet on earth. Before I see God in heaven, he must manifest himself to me here. I must, in a word, be a man sanctified, hallowed to God, before I can ever approach that holy Being, those saints in light, that holy heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" but "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

To produce in us this meetness, is the work of God. His grace only can mortify the evils of our nature, and make us partakers of his holiness. That grace is freely offered to you. Already has it been vouchsafed to you; for in its first communications it waiteth not for the call of man. It will increase by your diligence; for to him that hath to purpose shall be given. "He giveth more grace;" grace to lead you from repentance to pardon, and to that perfect love which casteth out all fear. Make it your business to go on unto perfection, and to be filled with all the fulness of God.

Give thanks to the Father for those who are made meet for the heavenly inheritance. You see the work in their heavenly mindedness, their devotional spirit and habits, and in their pure and upright walk. Glorify God in them.

Give thanks to God if the work be begun in yourselves. If it is not begun, give thanks that you are spared to this day; and now aspire to the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

SERMON XLIII.—*The Coming of the King of Zion.*

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Zech. ix, 9–12.

To whom does the prophet address this joyful apostrophe? And of whom does he speak? The person of whom he speaks is the King

Messiah; for he, the infallible interpreter, applied the prophecy to himself; and he showed publicly that he claimed it when he rode into Jerusalem upon an ass, the multitudes going before and following after, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

The call is first made to the Jewish nation. The term Zion, which is the name of the mountain upon which the temple was built, is sometimes in the Scriptures used figuratively for Jerusalem, and sometimes for the whole Jewish nation. Christ made his entry into that metropolis. He is described in the text as "having salvation," and as being lowly in his condescensions; and the Jews were called upon to rejoice in him, and to avail themselves of his extraordinary mercy. But when "he came unto his own, his own received him not."

This, however, is the lowest sense of the words. They refer to another Zion, another daughter of Jerusalem; that spiritual Church of which Zion and Jerusalem were types. The Christian Church, the new Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, which is free, and the mother of us all, the Church of believers, whether Jew or Gentile, collected out of all nations, constitutes the true Zion of God; and to this Zion the King cometh in the manner described in the text. The prophet speaks not of one event merely, but of the whole of our Lord's gracious conduct to his people. The children of Zion are called to be joyful in their King; for he is ever coming to them, "just and having salvation;" and by virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant bringing the prisoners out of the pit, and leading them all to the city of rest.

To enter into this subject we must remember that Christ came to produce, among other wondrous revolutions, a total change in the constitution of his visible Church on earth. For ages admission into that Church had been founded upon natural descent from Abraham, through the line of Isaac and Jacob. But now, men of all nations were to be admitted into the Church, and to a free participation of its privileges, on the condition of faith. The Church was to be invested with a more glorious character; but its glory was to be of a spiritual nature, and therefore concealed from the view of the unbelieving and carnal Jews. This was the doctrine that provoked them; and Zion, on this ground, would not receive her King. Yet the forming of the Church on the principle of faith proceeded nevertheless. The new Jerusalem was built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets; and she has received, and always will receive, her lowly King, with joy and shouting. To the Church of believing Jews and Gentiles, now the only Zion of God, are the words of the text addressed. She is called to rejoice and exult. Nor is the ground of this joy unreal, nor the joy itself temporary. Its foundations are firm as the nature of things themselves, and its duration will be everlasting. The reasons of this strong excitement are therefore given. They apply to the Church in all ages, and therefore to us. It is our King, who cometh to us, just, and having salvation, lowly, and speaking peace. These are the grounds of holy joy to which we are to yield ourselves; and for our edification we shall consider them in their order. We notice,

I. The character under which our King is presented to us.

1. He is just.

It is not punitive justice that is here intended, but righteousness, all that is comprehended in the term, or that of holiness.

This character is illustrated by his Divinity. He is just, perfectly and unchangeably: perfectly, because he is God; unchangeably, because essentially. It is his nature to be just; and therefore he cannot be otherwise. He is all light; and in him is no darkness at all. There is a holiness in the creatures; but there is a peculiar holiness in God. The very purity of holy spirits, though unconnected with sin, can never be so intense as his purity. For in his sight even the heavens are not clean; and his angels he charged with folly.

By his incarnation. All that moral perfection which is in God shone forth in him. His nature was spotless; and even his enemies gave witness to the immaculate purity of his life, on which keen-eyed envy itself could fix no charge. Before his purity the pride of a corrupt judge bowed, and confessed that it could find no fault in him. The traitor Judas, who had known him by the most familiar converse, in his repentance acknowledged that the thirty pieces of silver which he had received for betraying him were the price of "innocent blood." The human nature of Christ was spotless, because the Divine nature into which it was impersonated was thus perfectly holy. No heresy can be more pestilent than that of which we have heard of late, that the holiness of Christ consists in acts and habits, and not in nature. That only which was perfectly uncontaminated could be united in one person with that which is ineffably holy. This is the great foundation of the peculiar holiness there was in Christ, and which rendered it possible for him—the only adequate victim that ever appeared in our world,—to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, by offering himself without spot to God. The strong and emphatic requisition of the Old Testament, that the sacrifice should be whole, and sound, and spotless, and that it should be laid open, and the interior part of it examined, lest there should be in it any spot, prefigured the absolute, perfect, and unequivocal purity of the Lamb of God. And it was from this that the absolute purity of his sinless life flowed.

By his death. It is in his death, as a sacrifice for sin, that we see the most illustrious proof of his essential holiness, and his love of justice. Why said he, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God?" that will which appointed his incarnation, his deeper humiliation, his dreadful agony, his bitter death. Because, he adds, "thy law is within my heart." It was the object of his intense affection. He would not have its penalty reversed, though it should even fall upon himself. He would have mercy exercised in such a manner as leaves justice not only unstained, but glorified. And for this he meekly stooped to become a sacrifice, that he might magnify the law, and make it honourable, by the price at which its penalty should be bought off from us; the price of his own most precious blood.

By his work in the heart of man he illustrates farther his character as the righteous King. His kingdom is in the heart. Whatever rule he has over the outward conduct originates there. He came, indeed, to bring us salvation from the guilt and penalty of our offences; but he is the great restorer of souls; and pardon is but an intermediate work, intended to be followed by that upon which this Lover of righteousness and holiness has set his heart,—to restore man, and to exhibit

him again as created anew in Christ Jesus. When he made man at first, he impressed upon his nature, then yielding and plastic, the full image of his holiness. When he creates anew, the same effect is again produced, with a glorious triumph over the corruption and inaptness of our fallen nature. But he brings his inward kingdom under the rule of his right sceptre; he forms (to use another figure) his inward temple, like the temple of old, according to the pattern in his own mind. He lays its foundations and builds its walls, strong in righteousness. He brings in the ornaments of every lovely grace and harmonizing affection. He lights in it the lamps of heavenly wisdom; he kindles upon its altar the everlasting fire; he inflames there those grateful clouds of its incense; and, delighting with man upon earth, he says, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." His kingdom is first "righteousness," then "peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." In this way the work of Christ in the heart of man is an illustration of the character ascribed to him in the text.

This character is likewise illustrated by his conduct toward his Church. "A sceptre of righteousness," a right sceptre, "is the sceptre of thy kingdom." By this sceptre he tries and governs his visible Church. Yes, you say, it will be manifested at last, in the great day of account. Yes; and it is also manifested now. It is in the order of Scripture that we should be instructed in the essential holiness and governing right of Christ our King. He is judge in his Church even now, though the judgment which he administers is not without mercy. What distinctions, nay, separations, does he even now make in Zion! There are in that mass of people who bear his name, and say unto him, Lord, Lord, those who are his, and those who are not his. Could we see him apply his right sceptre, and bring us to the rule of a real, vital, and sanctioned Christianity, we should see the difference between the one and the other. Were his administration visible, and could we see the dealings of God with the souls of individuals, what surprising disclosures would be made to us! We should see him resisting the proud, and giving grace to the humble; casting the prayers of the Pharisee to the winds, and receiving with gracious acceptance the silent sigh of the mourning penitent, heavy laden with a sense of guilt and unworthiness, and praying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." To many a forward zealot he says even now, "I know you not;" and to many a secret traitor, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" He passes by, in the visitations of his grace and consolations, many who seem to be first; and singles out, as the objects of his special favour, many a modest and retiring spirit, who seems to be the last in the judgment of man. This is an instructive type of his administration at last, when he shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and when he shall gather his elect from the four winds of heaven, and present them to his Father, a glorious Church, in perfect conformity to his own holiness. Let us never forget that the King who governs his Church is "just;" and although all his discriminations are accompanied with mercy; yet if there is any thing cherished in our hearts which is contrary to the essential purity of his nature, if it be not repented of and renounced, he is so "just" hat he cannot bring us salvation.

Rejoice, then, thou daughter of Zion, because thy King cometh thus

to thee. He cometh demonstrated to be God, and possessing all the glorious moral attributes of his nature: he cometh unto thee, the bright and perfect example of all purity and holiness; he cometh, as having, by his own eternal love of justice, sacrificed himself, in order to open the way to God; he cometh unto thee for the purpose of restoring the spirit of man to its original character, and making it shine the reflection of his own purity, and thus preparing it for a higher and a better state of being. And rejoice, too, in this; this his administration, indicated by his sceptre of righteousness, is designed for our benefit; for our salvation; to awaken us from sleep; to prevent us from slumbering again; and to enable us to walk before him in all things well pleasing, and pass the time of our sojourning here in holy fear

2. He has salvation.

He has it meritoriously. To save is an act to which the benevolence of his Godhead disposes him; and "judgment is his strange work." They who think otherwise of him ascribe to him a character which is refuted by the whole tenor of his word, and of his dispensations. But then guilty man is not merely an object of benevolence. He is a subject of moral government. Justice also has its claims; and benevolence, when not a weakness, is always regulated by wisdom. The difficulty, we have seen, was removed by the sacrifice of Christ; who "offered himself without spot to God;" and "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us" to him.

What reason of joy there is in this consideration! The salvation which we need, and which all need, is in his hands. He has purchased the right to bestow it. He has paid the price, and obtained the blessing; and it is deposited in his hands; for he has "received gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The work is virtually accomplished; and nothing remains but for us to apply to him, and avail ourselves of that which he has done in our behalf; to put in our claims in the right which we have in him, and bring away the fulness of his salvation in every prayer we offer before his throne. Contemplating this, we enter into the meaning of a point on which the apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, lays so much stress: I mean, that Christ offered himself once for all; died for sin once; and hath by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Whatever our case may be, no new means are necessary to reach it; no new offering is to be sought by us; no new means are to be applied by Christ. The offering is complete for all that believe. It reaches in its efficacy the depths of the deepest guilt; it extends its benefits to all ages; it has a value which claims for the believer all possible blessings. It is as powerful now as it was when the apostles, immediately after his resurrection, saw the wounds fresh in his hands and feet, he having just come down from the sacrificial altar. All that is comprehended in the word salvation,—all the blessings that our nature is capable of, or can be made capable of by future improvement through eternity,—have been purchased and prepared for us; and they are in the hands of the slain Lamb. His blessings flow here in streams of grace; and throughout eternity they will flow in floods of glory. He has salvation; and if we live without the enjoyment of its blessings, the fault is all our own. The work is done so far as the offering of the Saviour, and the establishment of the covenant of mercy with man

are concerned. The ransom is paid down, the ransom price is accepted; and all the blessings we need are put into the hands of Him that loved us, and gave himself for us; of Him that is now seated upon a throne of mercy to dispense freely all the blessings of his salvation. O the guilt, then, of those who reject the Gospel! And the communication of these blessings to all those who make a penitent and believing application to the throne of the heavenly grace is absolutely certain; for all the blessings are already there, and all are promised by Him that cannot lie. The salvation which we want, and which the Church wants, is in the hands of thy King, O Zion, who cometh unto thee!

But salvation is the subject of his official administration. He cometh to Zion, to his Church, and the whole of his administration is connected with salvation.

Does he give the word? It is the promise and the rule of salvation. It offers salvation to us; and unfolds the richness and variety of its blessings up to eternal life. It sets before us, as the gift of God, deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, from death and hell.

Does he collect a Church, and denominate it his body? His Spirit fills it, to discover the want of salvation, and reveal the means of obtaining it; to inspire desire, to assist our efforts, to realize within us all that the external word exhibits to faith and hope. The Spirit is administered for this purpose,—first, to convince the world of sin, and then to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us; to soften the hardness of our hearts; to be in us the Spirit of prayer and faith; to lead us to God; to witness our sonship; to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; to carry into effect the great redeeming purpose in the experience of individual men; in forming them for himself, as the instruments of his glory.

Does he perpetuate the ministry of his Gospel? Lo, he is with his servants unto the end of the world, to make them the means of conveying this salvation. They are to plant the seed; to water it; to watch its growth; to clear it from noxious weeds; and to present the full harvest of sanctified souls, gathered out of every land, perfect in Christ Jesus. He has sent them to proclaim the terms of pardon, and to beseech men to be reconciled to God; and he goes with them to bless the word, and render it successful. He accompanies it with gracious power to the hearts of men; making his servants "ministers not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Does he appoint his Sabbaths and ordinances? They are not to be regarded as a mere ceremonial, tending to no moral end. We are not to sink the ordinances of Christian worship into superstitious observances, or into mere sentimentality. They are not intended to give only a decent character to life, and produce a general acknowledgment of God and his providence. Thank God, we know their character better. "O daughter of Zion," in these ordinances "thy King cometh unto thee, having salvation." Here is his throne; here he receives petitions; here he dispenses pardon; here he comforts the afflicted; here he brings individual believers into nearer communion with himself; and here he sanctifies and saves, that he may for ever glorify.

By the institution of his ordinances, and his constant presence and agency, the Church is made the deposit and source of salvation to the

world. The word of the Lord goes forth from our Zion, and the light shines from this "perfection of beauty." The ministers of Christ are the messengers of the Churches. The stream is open here, however wide and far it flows. The very sacraments are signs and seals of his salvation.

Such, then, is the character of our King. He is just; he has salvation; and he cometh to us continually, in all these means and ordinances, to administer it: thus showing us the lowliness of his condescensions and the extent of his mercy.

But the text calls our attention, not only to the character of Christ, but also,

II. To the spiritual nature of his kingdom.

This is strongly indicated by the circumstances connected with his public and royal entry into Jerusalem. This event was intended to call off his disciples and us from the vain notion of a civil monarchy. They thought he was then assuming it; but even then we see him rejecting it. Seeing that our Lord took so much pains to correct the errors of the disciples upon this subject, we may infer that it was of the first importance that they should know that his kingdom was not of this world, but was spiritual in the strictest sense of the word. There is a tendency in man to look even now, as formerly, for something more than a spiritual kingdom; a kingdom of visible power, and glory, and splendour; and thus their attention, it is to be feared, is often turned by these imaginations from that which is the true glory of the kingdom of our Saviour,—its spiritual character. Now the text, especially when taken in connection with the history of our Lord's riding into Jerusalem, and fulfilling this prophecy, most emphatically establishes the fact that his kingdom is spiritual in its nature. This prophecy was accomplished when he rode into Jerusalem. There was something in that event which seemed to indicate an intention to establish an earthly monarchy. So the disciples seemed to think, if we may judge from the transport which they manifested. The multitude also appear to have thought that he who had kept himself so obscure was about to ascend the throne of his father David; and hence they cried, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." And they spread their garments in the way, and cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them on the ground, and were full of ecstasies.—He entered thus to show that he was a King; but he disappointed their expectation in the very circumstances of this event, in order to show that his kingdom was not of this world. There are some circumstances mentioned in the text, and recorded in the history of its fulfilment, which strikingly indicate this.

1. Our Lord rode upon an ass.

Some writers have suggested that the ass was a nobler animal in Judea than it is in this country; and that formerly judges and kings rode upon it. But all this proves nothing to the point. While this was an act of regality, it was also an act of lowliness. But to know why our Lord rode upon an ass, we must consult the text; only the former part of which is quoted by the evangelist: for it was the custom of the Jews to quote only the introductory part of prophecies which related to our Saviour, without any design to confine their at-

tention to those introductory parts. In the quotations which occur in the New Testament, therefore, the reference is frequently made to an entire section of prophecy, only a few words of which are actually mentioned. A singular law under which the Israelites were placed prohibited the use both of horses and chariots of war; and there seem to have been two reasons for this: the first was, that while some nations placed their main confidence in cavalry, especially when connected with chariots, the Jewish people were taught, in the absence of such an array of human strength, to trust for protection in no power but that of Jehovah. The second reason of the prohibition seems to have been, to prevent them from indulging themselves in schemes of aggression upon other nations. This prohibition of the use of horses was violated by their kings in succession, who were frequently reproved for it by the prophets. The text contains an allusion to this subject. "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." It appears, then, that our Lord rode upon an ass to denote that he was a peaceful Sovereign.—He came not like an earthly conqueror, with the horse, and the chariot, and the battle bow. He came "lowly and meek, having salvation;" and his great business was to "speak peace to the heathen." Those views of the kingdom of Christ, which mingle themselves with worldly aggrandizement, and the pomp and wrath of a conqueror, symbolize with the carnal prejudices of the Jews, and ill accord with his real character. The other circumstance to which I referred in connection with this subject is still more important.

2. He returned by night to the mount of Olives.

Had he been about to establish a civil reign, he would have remained in the city, and have given the night, as well as the day, to the arrangement and execution of his plan. But after he had been hailed by the multitude he retired to solitude and prayer. He seeks not solace and repose in the family of Bethany, but spends the night in the open air; not in forming schemes for shedding the blood of others, but in preparing to pour out his own as the price of the world's redemption.

3. The children celebrated his praises in the temple.

When he entered into Jerusalem the multitude went with him in the procession, and sung their hosannas; and afterward we find the children joining in the song. The children are not mentioned at all in the account of the procession; but they took up the song of praise in the temple. This is the history: "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Matt. xxi, 15, 16.

What mean these words? They are a quotation from the eighth psalm, which begins thus: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" The principal subject of the psalm is our redemption, by

which the excellent name of our Lord was to be magnified in all the earth, and by the influence of which the enemy and avenger were to be stilled. "When I consider thy heavens," continues the psalmist, "the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" We know what this means by the exposition of St. Paul, Heb. ii, 5–9. The eternal Son of God took hold of our nature, and made himself one with us to raise us to the knowledge and love of himself, and to glorify us with himself for ever. And then, in consequence of his being made, in his humiliation, for a little time, "lower than the angels," he was "crowned with glory and honour." He was crowned with all the glory and honour of his mediatorial reign; having all things put under his feet; for the world is subjected to him. This is the argument of the psalm: the plan of human redemption, so wonderfully executed by our Saviour, as to make the name of the Lord excellent in all the earth. We at once then perceive the meaning of that passage, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." These are the words of the evangelist. The language of the psalm is, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength." What can be the meaning of this, but strong words, strong speech? speech which was to derive all its strength from the gracious subject celebrated in the psalm; that strong speech which is to be employed in making known to all men the great plan and purpose of human redemption, until the name of the Lord should be excellent in all the earth. Our Lord called his own disciples babes; saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Here we see the "babes" out of whose mouth God was to ordain this strong speech, this mighty language, which was to "still the enemy and the avenger;" and thus we arrive at the true meaning of the beautiful passage which describes the children in the temple,—brought there by a special Providence. As Christ upon one occasion took a child, and set him in the midst of his disciples as a type or pattern to them; so a special Providence seems to have brought these children together in the temple, and to have put into their mouths the strong speech, "Hosanna to the Son of David." The whole was a type, a visible and living symbol, of the character of the persons by whom the praise and glory of Christ were to be made manifest in all the earth. The whole affair was typical, and beautifully typical too. Being compared to these children, the weakness of the first preachers of the Gospel was indicated; and viewing the mighty effects produced by such feeble instruments, who would not exclaim, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

This is applicable, in part, to all Christians. Publish the praise of your Saviour; speak of the glory of his person and kingdom; make manifest his truth; declare his mercy to all mankind; and out of your mouth he will ordain strength, and make known his excellent name.

More especially does this subject apply to the true ministers of God in all ages, who have been selected, not from the philosophers of this world, but from persons of simple and prayerful minds. They have been chosen by the Saviour that there might be nothing in what was visible in them to account for the effects that should follow; but that it might be seen in the result that they had the evangelical "treasure in

earthen vessels;" and that a higher power than their own had ordained and perfected God's praise out of their mouth, and ordained and prepared the mighty speech which was to accomplish his designs in the conversion of men, and in stilling the enemy and avenger. True it is, that all this has provoked the pride and enmity of unregenerate men, as the songs of the children provoked the enmity of the Jewish doctors and rabbins. "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased." The answer of our Lord is, "Have ye not read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" O that God in his mercy would deign to perfect his praise more fully out of our mouths; that he would put into our mouths those strong words, that, accompanied by his mighty power, we might be the instruments of bringing to nought "the things that are;" putting an end to the kingdom of Satan, and hastening that glorious period when the name of God our Saviour shall be "excellent in all the earth!"

All these and many other particulars may be selected from the sacred history to show that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom; and this is the glory of it. Those persons who see and admire nothing in Christianity but outward splendour and glory have shown a bad taste and a bad judgment. This is the true glory of Christ's kingdom, that it erects its dominion in the human heart and mind; spreads its light and power over all the faculties and principles of our nature; ordaining the praise of God out of the mouth; so that every one who is brought under its influence becomes the instrument of instructing others, and subduing them to the service of the same Saviour. By an invisible influence communicated from heart to heart, and from one class of society to another, is the work of God to be carried on, till "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Christ still comes to us in what the world calls lowliness; but great power attends his word and ordinances, extending his dominion, not by the appalling apparatus of which some dream, but by speaking peace to wretched and sinful men.

The text calls our attention,

III. To the extent of this spiritual dominion of Christ, and the address to those who are comprehended within its gracious influence.

1. His dominion is to extend "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

The literal meaning of these words seems to be, from the Arabian Gulf to the Syrian shores; and from the river Euphrates to the extremity of Canaan. This extent of country was conquered by David, and is frequently spoken of in prophetic language as the type of Messiah's conquests and universal dominion. Our Lord now reigns from sea to sea, and from every river to the ends of the earth. All power is given to him both in heaven and upon earth over a redeemed race; and wherever there is a man upon earth he is under a merciful dominion, and may look up to the King of Zion for grace and salvation.

2. The state of mankind, it is true, is deeply affecting. It is a state of wretchedness and danger. They are "prisoners," cast into a "pit wherein is no water."

This is spoken in allusion to the ancient punishment of criminals,

who were sometimes thrown into a pit, and left to die of thirst; and sometimes, after enduring the torments of thirst, were brought forth to execution. Such is the representation of the state of fallen man; and such is our state. We are prisoners in a pit; and in this perishing condition the King of Zion comes to save us. The Jews would conclude that it was one part of the Messiah's work to rescue their captive countrymen in various places, who were as prisoners in a pit where there is no water, and restore them again to their own nation. Thus they would indulge the prejudice of an earthly and visible dominion of the Messiah, who would deliver the prisoners by conquest and the sword. But all this is refuted by the language of the text. The prisoners are to be rescued, not by physical force, but by the blood of the covenant. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." This is a fine and interesting view of the covenant. God's covenant of mercy is a covenant of deliverance; deliverance out of the pit; the restoration of the prisoner to light and liberty, to life, and salvation, and joy: and all this is by the blood of the covenant; the blood which has sealed it; the blood by which it is established; the blood which, in fact, has purchased to Christ the right to deliver. Wherever you are, however wretched your state of imprisonment may be, your Redeemer is mighty, the Lord of hosts is his name; and he is near, if you call upon him, to bring you out of the pit, and set you free.

3. Then, upon this, there follows an address to the prisoners: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee."

There is some reference here, I doubt not, though in a very low sense, to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon. A few of them only had returned. Zechariah was one of the prophets whose office it was to urge greater numbers to return, to rebuild the temple, and to re-establish the worship of God in their country. The Jews in Babylon, enslaved, and made the sport of their enemies, were exhorted in this first and lowest sense of the prophecy, to turn to their "strong hold," that is, to Zion, seeing their warfare was accomplished; and they were invited to come out from those distant regions in which they dwelt as captives, to return to their Zion and their temple; to come as free men; to join themselves, as of old, in companies, and enjoy their solemn feasts, and worship the God of their fathers in the holy place. The promise of giving double, according to the Hebrew idiom, is that of giving great abundance; which we know, in point of fact, did follow the restoration of the Jews for a considerable time.

But this is one of the lowest applications of the passage; though still it serves to present the whole in a most interesting aspect before us. If the Jews, scattered throughout the neighbouring countries, in a state of servitude and degradation, were, after this proclamation, "prisoners of hope;" in how much higher a sense, brethren, are we "prisoners of hope!" If in a deeper sense than they we are captives, yet in a higher sense than they were, we are the "prisoners of hope," because of the blood of the everlasting covenant. Art thou oppressed with the guilt of sin, and held by its terrors? O think of the blood of the covenant of deliverance which has been shed! Thou art a prisoner of hope. Plead the purchase, and take the rescue. If bound by the

chain of sin, and subject to its degradation, you are still prisoners of hope; and your deliverance, in that respect, is to be completed. You are to come out of the horrid pit and miry clay, and your feet are to be established, to the praise of your great Deliverer; and you are to go up to your Zion, the strong hold, to come into the Church, to join in its sacred services, to obtain promised blessings, to put yourselves under the charge and care of your Saviour. Receive, then, the holy King of Zion, who comes to you just, and having salvation. There is a wretched slave of sin,—which is, perhaps, the character of many of you,—bound by the degrading fetters of sinful habits; you are in that world which is doomed to perish; and you belong to the aliens, and not to the commonwealth of Israel. By the mercy of God, embracing the invitation, you renounce that wretched world, and those habits of vice which have hitherto degraded you; and, made penitent for your sins, you flee to the blood of the covenant, to Zion, the strong hold, singing to the praise and glory of his grace, who has made you accepted in the Beloved; delivered from all your sins, confirmed and strengthened in all goodness, enjoying the solemnity of your Sabbaths, offering up spiritual worship, made daily more like God, and better prepared for the solemnities of heaven; to such a restoration, the restoration of Israel from Babylon to Jerusalem is not at all to be compared. Turn you, then, to your strong hold: guilty as you are, you are still prisoners of hope.

But there is another view. The law has not quite released its claim upon us. We must be arrested by the hand of death, and be put into the prison of the grave. Even the righteous must be prisoners there. We are all indebted to God for the victory over death, that, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, we are not prisoners held in the chains of the slavish fear of death. We are saved from that. But we must go into the pit. But let that give us no concern. We shall be prisoners of hope! Hope shall be written on the tomb! Hope never was written on the tomb of man till it was written there by the finger of the hand which was stretched upon the cross. The prisoners shall rise again; and when we shall, through the blood of the covenant, be raised from the pit of the tomb, we shall turn to a higher strong hold, that glorious city of God, of which Jerusalem, in all its beauty and splendour, was but a faint symbol. Thither the tribes go up. They are going up now; and the last great day of assemblage shall take place, when we shall come literally to Mount Zion,—I mean to the heavenly Zion, in a higher sense than we can do here. There is an emphasis in the words not to be confined to our religious privileges upon earth. There is a time approaching when we shall come to "Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." That blood shall speak in our behalf through eternity, and claim new blessings for us; and the prisoners of hope shall enter into the everlasting light and liberty which our Saviour has promised.

And now, then, rejoice greatly, thou daughter of Zion. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let us cultivate, my bre-

hren, feelings of gratitude; let us often turn to this inspiring subject in our meditations; let us, knowing that our Saviour cometh to us in these lowly condescensions, and with this fulness of grace, be always ready to welcome and receive him, not merely in the regular observance of his ordinances, but in the most cordial love. We shall thus live in communion with him, experience the manifestations of his continual presence, and not only be set at liberty from the bondage which once entangled and degraded us, but be enabled to stand fast in that liberty wherewith he hath made us free, and grow up in holiness, till we behold him as he is, and give him the praise that is due to his name. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Let us look without any dread to the future. Let us remember that the victory is certain over all our trials and enemies. As the redeemed of the Lord, let us "return and go to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads;" and then, at last, we "shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away!" God grant us this grace, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Sermon XLIV.—*The Choice of Moses.*

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward," Hebrews xi, 24–26.

You know the history of the extraordinary personage of the text Born when the sanguinary decree of Pharaoh was in force, he was a child of sorrow and fear, you would say. No; he was a child of faith; for by faith his parents hid him; and they were not afraid of the king's command. O noble instance of the supporting power of that faith, of which so much is said in the chapter before us! It quelled a father's anxieties, and a mother's fears, when a decree had gone forth directing their son to be put to death. In that faith they hid him three months; and in that faith they placed him in the ark of rushes, and commended him, not to chance, but to God.

You know how this faith was honoured. Pharaoh's daughter found the child, and God touched her heart with pity. He was trained in a court, and was thus fitted for true eminence as a ruler; his mother was, by another wonderful arrangement of Providence, appointed his nurse; and thus, through her, he was trained up in the true religion. In all this we see the wondrous windings of the providence which governs all things.

The history just given relates to his infancy and youth; that in the text respects the choice of his manhood. "When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Let us consider,

I. The choice of Moses.

Egypt at that time was a powerful nation; considerably in advance of the generality of mankind in regard to learning and the arts. As Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he had the prospect of high office and dignity. This is intimated in the text. He was in a situation to command at once both "pleasures" and "treasures in Egypt." Such were the circumstances of Moses "when he was come to years." On him the Spirit of God had wrought; discovering to him the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the nature and necessity of true religion; and drawing him, by a secret influence, to choose the good and better part. As his mother had committed him to the Nile in faith, she had instructed him in faith; and in both cases God honoured her faith, and heard her prayer. She who had with gratitude seen her son adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, by means of which his life was preserved, saw him with greater gratitude, no doubt, adopted as a child of God, and making the God of Israel his choice.

This was manifest by his avowing the people of God, though in affliction, to be his brethren, and the objects of his affection and preference. He espoused the cause of one of them who was oppressed with wrong, and defended him. He suffered affliction with them, though not in their company; for he fled into the land of Midian; yet he suffered affliction as well as they. He gave up the pleasures and riches and honours of Egypt, to be a keeper of sheep; and the house of the priest of Midian, to enjoy the worship of the true God, (for the Midianites were descendants from Abraham,) and in the wilderness to converse with God in prayer and praise.

Such was the noble and exemplary conduct of Moses when he came to years. He renounced the world, because he could not enjoy it without sin; he chose for his portion comparative poverty; for he never made suit to be restored to the court; but with the people of God he had the Divine blessing, and the approval of his conscience.

We proceed to notice,

II. The principle which influenced this choice.

That principle was faith; a firm and cordial, not a cold and cursory, faith in the revelations of that truth which constituted the patriarchal religion.

The leading principles of the patriarchal religion were, the being and perfections of God; the guilt and depravity of man; his consequent need of pardon and holiness; justification by faith in the appointed sacrifice, of which the offering of slain beasts was the significant type; peace and joy, union with God, his blessing through life, and the hope of future glory, as consequent upon believing.

In these principles Moses was doubtless instructed by his pious mother; these he meditated upon, laid to heart, prayed over; and God wrought in his heart faith, that enlightening principle, by which new measures of things are taken; and this faith determined his resolution. Let us now observe how it operated.

1. He concluded that to be associated with the people of God, though in affliction, was better than to enjoy the pleasures of sin; and he judged right. But what are the advantages of union with the people, the Church, of God?

Instruction. The Church is the depositary of truth; and God perpetuates a people to confess it. He raises up ministers also to teach

it. It is by the instrumentality of truth, that men are saved from sin, and conducted to heaven. But the truth was not found among the Egyptians. They had turned it into a lie, and were the dupes of error in its most injurious and revolting forms.

Worship. The people of God worship him in religious assemblies, in the use of pure forms, and in spirit and in truth. The advantages of such a service are unspeakable. A holy and cheering influence from God is vouchsafed to those who thus draw near to him. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," says our Saviour, "there am I in the midst of them." A similar promise was made under a former dispensation: "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." These advantages could not be enjoyed in Egypt, where religious homage was offered to the meanest reptiles, and to the work of men's hands, and God was either unknown or set at defiance.

An interest in God's covenant. The people with whom Moses chose to suffer affliction were the people of God. He had been merciful to their unrighteousness, cancelled their guilt, renewed their nature, and received them as a peculiar treasure to himself. They were placed under his immediate protection; and while they were obedient to his will, were authorized to look to him for every blessing both of providence and grace. In this covenant the Egyptian idolaters had no interest.

The communion of saints. In Egypt Moses might have had communion with her princes, her philosophers, her artists; but they were "of the world;" and intercourse with them would have been very different in its effects from intercourse with the devout worshippers of God. One would have tended to produce hardness of heart, and a worldly spirit; the other to elevate and purify the mind, and prepare it for God and heaven.

Be this, then, your choice. Say, in regard to the people of God "This people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God."

2. Faith enabled him to take a right estimate of the pleasures of sin. They "are but for a season." But what are sinful pleasures?

Every pleasure which arises from what God has forbidden. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Every pleasure which, if not expressly forbidden, cannot be reconciled to the general principles of the word of God. "Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

All such pleasures as weaken the tone of our piety, and dissipate our thoughts, so that we lose our taste and relish for Divine things.—Such are the pleasures of gayety, of unhallowed reading, and often those of imagination; and they are tacitly contrasted with those which spring from God, and which lead the mind to him.

They are but for a season, short-lived. They are so denominated, because they are only occasional. Man must labour and suffer, and can only occasionally enjoy his pleasures. Beside, the appetite for them palls. Spiritual pleasures follow us every where, and are the perpetual sunshine of the breast.

Sinful pleasures are said to be only for a season, because they are dissipated by reflection. This destroys them. The music becomes

harsh in the ears of reflection; the laugh loses its power; the wit no longer sparkles; the delight no longer excites. Strange is the transformation when conscience begins her office, and calls the sinner to an account for misspent time. The sight of a broken law, of a slighted Saviour, of approaching death and judgment, and of future and everlasting perdition, turns the pleasures of sin into wormwood and gall. Whereas spiritual pleasures bear the strictest reflection. Peter, James, and John said, "Master, it is good for us to be here;" and they felt it to the end of their lives. So David exclaims, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Spiritual enjoyments are so far from appearing less desirable as we advance in life and knowledge, that the first prayer of the heart when God has been forsaken, and we are made sensible of our loss, is, "Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts." Come back and restore to me the joy of thy salvation.

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void,
The world can never fill."

The pleasures of sin are but for a season considered relatively.—They change with the changes of life. They are scattered by disappointment. Haman acknowledged that his wealth and honours availed him nothing while Mordecai the Jew sat at the king's gate, and refused to bow the knee before him. Sickness and age, days of darkness and vanity, render us incapable of many of those sinful pleasures to which we were formerly addicted. Whereas spiritual pleasures remain through the whole succession of the seasons, in summer and winter too.

The pleasures of sin collectively are but for a season. The whole sum and succession of them vanish with life. The rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, died; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. His pleasures were then for ever lost, and even the gratification of a drop of water was denied.

3. His faith regarded a future world. "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

There is a two-fold reward mentioned in Scripture. One is a righteous reward to the sinner; the other is a reward of mercy conferred upon the man who has renounced all for God. Faith respects both; for it is "the evidence of things not seen." If we had this faith, should we sport on the brink of eternity; and forget that after death comes the judgment? Or should we faint under affliction, when everlasting rest and joy are before us; or faint under reproach, when everlasting honour is ready to crown the sons of God?

We proceed to consider,

III. The instruction which the subject conveys to us.

1. We are taught that true religion is a reasonable matter of choice.

When Moses left the court of Pharaoh, and connected himself with the people of God, he was come to years. He was not a child; he was not in his dotage; he was not draining out the dregs of life on a death bed, with a weakened intellect. He was in the vigour of youth, and possessed of a highly-cultivated mind. This, then, is our wisdom. All carelessness and sin God has stamped with the name of folly. In recommending to you the renunciation of the world and sin, and the surrender of yourselves to God, we challenge your reason.

2. We are taught that no man serves God for nought.

No man loses by him. Moses refused to be king in Egypt; and he became king in Jeshurun. He turned his eye from the splendours of Egypt's seductive philosophy; and the Lord passed by, and showed him his own glory, and proclaimed his name. Moses learned in that sight, he heard in those few sentences, more than the study of years in the schools of Egyptian philosophy could have supplied. He might have been king of Egypt; and after the reign of a few years have been laid under a pyramid, or in a splendid tomb in the rock, as the Pharaohs were; but greater honour was reserved for his death. He died, and the Lord buried him. All who make choice of God and his service shall be gainers; though not precisely in the same manner. "He that loseth his life for my sake," says Jesus, "shall find it;" while he that saveth his life by shunning the cross shall lose it for ever.

3. We are taught that, if we are come to years we ought to make our choice; and we are also taught what choice to make.

I ask the young, whether they have remembered their Creator in the days of their youth; and, in preference to all worldly things, have sought first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. I ask the middle aged, whether, in their strength and vigour, they have chosen the good part which shall not be taken from them. I ask the aged, who are tottering on the brink of the grave, whether they have thus chosen Christ and his salvation, and have prepared for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. O shame and grief, if that choice is not yet made; if a long life of sin is yet unrepented of; if the accumulated guilt of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age, be uncancelled, and the heart yet unrenewed!

SERMON XLV.—*The coming of God's Kingdom.*

"Thy kingdom come," Matthew vi, 10.

WHEN another evangelist introduces this form of prayer, he tells us that "the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The Jewish Church had its forms of prayer. Wise and good men, distinguished rabbies, appear to have added to these sacred compositions in different ages. They were, doubtless, suited to the state of the Jewish Church and nation, whether

in captivity or independence. The ministry of John the Baptist had placed the Jewish Church in new circumstances, awakening, as it had done, the expectation of the sudden approach of the Messiah. Into that hope he had baptized multitudes,—Jerusalem and all Judea. We have not the prayer which he gave to his followers. It probably referred to the speedy advent of the Messiah, and was a penitential office, more fully to prepare the soul, by deeper humiliation, for the joys of a salvation of which John might speak, but which he could not bestow. That great office only belongs to Him of whom John was the forerunner.

The Church was again placed in new circumstances by the entrance of Christ on his public ministry. The Messiah had appeared, but few had believed on him. The splendid delusion had passed away, that such should be the pomp and power of his appearing, that the nations should at once encircle his brow with the diadem of dominion, and hail him as their sovereign. He grew up as a root out of a dry ground; men hid their faces from him, and esteemed him not. It was then seen that his conquests were to be moral ones; that a long and powerful contest would ensue; that the Messiah himself would call forth the energies and co-operations of his people, whom he would require both to pray and labour for this great work. Hence the kind of prayer he taught them. As to his kingdom, he places it, as it were, in distant and dark perspective before them. It was rather the object of hope than of fruition. The King was with them, but his kingdom was not yet come. This great subject was, therefore, commended to their prayers; in fact, to the prayers of the Church in all ages. "Hallowed," we are commanded to say, "be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." And still is the same object to be kept in view. Thus is prayer to be made till all in heaven and earth shall unite with us in saying, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

Let us then,

I. Consider the prayer of the text; and,

II. The instruction which is conveyed by the petition being made a part of the daily prayers of the Church throughout all ages.

I. Consider the prayer of the text.

It is for the coming of the kingdom of God. But what kingdom? Not, certainly, the kingdom of nature. That commenced at the creation. Worlds were then suspended beneath the eternal throne, received their impulse from the hand that made them, and moved according to his will. That kingdom cannot be interrupted; nor can it terminate, but with the very existence of things. When that government ceases, stars start from their orbits, every atom is set loose, and heaven and earth, convulsed and wild, shall haste to everlasting night and nothingness.

Nor is it the kingdom of providence. From the beginning this has been exercised. Day and night, seed time and harvest, show the constant superintendence exercised over material elements. The general punishment of wickedness, the general support experienced by the righteous, show both the existence of a providential government, and the moral principles on which it is founded. There is no age, however deeply hidden and obscured in antiquity, but furnishes some indications of moral government. "When he giveth quietness, who then

can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only;" is the plain and palpable inscription which has been written upon the loftiest monuments of human power, and on the melancholy ruins of fallen greatness; on the various fortunes both of nations and of private life.

Nor is it the kingdom of grace, generally considered. That kingdom is established and is set up, too, in each individual returning to God by his Son.

The kingdom alluded to is evidently that spoken of by Daniel, in his celebrated interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He speaks of the head of gold, the Babylonian empire; the breast and arms of silver, the Medo-Persian; the body and thighs of brass, the Macedonian monarchy; the legs of iron, the Roman power. But in the days of those kings, that is in the last of them, and before the four great monarchies should have passed away with the fourth, the God of heaven himself should set up a kingdom.

Yet grace had been administered to guilty men before this. It descended and healed our first parents, and washed away the first and greatest offence ever committed by mortals. In an age precedent to the time when the head of gold rose up, and in its towering height first directed the attention of men to the sublime spectacle of a universal monarchy, Abraham, a guilty man, had walked with God; Melchizedek, king of Salem, was priest of the most high God; and the Mosaic types and sacrifices had led the weary to a throne of grace, and taught them the doctrines of pardon and salvation. This kingdom, therefore, is the visible kingdom of the Messiah; of Messiah manifested, and under his personal administration; of a Messiah acknowledged and loved by his servants, but against whom the kings of the earth, and its rulers, have taken counsel in vain; a kingdom given into his hands by the Father, and which he is to claim, establish, extend, and administer, so long as the sun and moon endure, even to all generations.

We have referred to the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and the interpretation of it by Daniel, in order to fix the meaning of the term as used in the text; and we cannot better explain its nature than by continuing to refer to the same sublime portion of prophecy.

1. The kingdom, though that of the Messiah, is considered in the text as the kingdom of God: "Thy kingdom come."

This is also the language of Daniel: "In those days shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." This is the great work of the Father, whose operations in Scripture are distinctly marked. To accredit the Son as equal with himself, and truly Divine, by him he made the worlds. All things were created by the immediate agency of the Son, whether visible or invisible.

To give solemnity to the event of his installation, dim and indefinite visions of his glory were presented before the eyes of men, but shining brighter and brighter to the perfect day. All this was preparatory to the full revelation of the great mystery of godliness. Ages of providential rule and control with reference to this event succeeded each other, that, in the fulness of time, in the best and most important season, the foundations might be laid for his everlasting throne. He died, because no king but one, who was both priest and king, could erect

a government under which the world could be made happy. But him the Father raised on the third day, and showed him openly; then raised him to his regal seat; and the voice of paternal divinity, the oracle of an irreversible decree, pronounced aloud, amidst the prostrate choirs of angels, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Treasures of grace and wisdom were laid up in him, that from him all the supplies of a guilty world might be sought. His name was made the acceptable, the commanding, appeal to the ear of God in every prayer, that his name might be above every name. And his grace and condescension were surrounded with attributes of loftiest majesty, and even terror, that the reverence, as well as the faith of the world might be commanded, for "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." By him he will judge the world in righteousness; and from his lips, "Come, ye blessed," or "Depart, ye cursed," will seal the everlasting weal or wo of all mankind. His kingdom, therefore, is the kingdom of God.

2. This kingdom was formed, and is still maintained, and will effect its conquests, by Divine agency.

It is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands; or, as the margin reads, which was not in hands. The hand of human power did not cut it from the mountain; and whatever form it bears was not given it by human might; nor is it human agency that shall extend its swelling amplitude, and give to it that mighty impetus by which it shall overturn and destroy the kingdoms of men. It is, in the strictest sense, the kingdom of heaven.

Such is the kingdom of the Messiah. "My kingdom," himself said, "is not of this world." He succeeds to it, not as of earthly right, but by the gift of the Father. His conception was miraculous and Divine: he is the holy one of God. His qualifications were not from human studies, or the wisdom of this world. "Whence," it was asked, "hath this man letters, having never learned?" "The Spirit of the Lord God" was upon him: hence his wisdom. His subjects come not to him by natural descent, or worldly compact. They are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

It is this spiritual character of the kingdom of Christ, that makes it present so striking a contrast to the kingdoms of the earth. View the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires, in their progress and glory. Here little is seen but man; the array of battles, the splendour of triumph, the haughty mien of power, the toils and contrivances of policy. Man is the only being celebrated in the songs of their poets, emblazoned in the volumes of their historians. Sages and warriors pass in succession before us; and to their skill or valour is every achievement referred. In the true kingdom of Christ, nothing is seen but God. Human hands are employed; but it is not human power which gives them success. The Divine power is only rendered the more conspicuous by the inferior agency which it employs. If missionaries from Judea changed the religion of the ancient world, who does not see, in the comparative inadequacy of the instrument, the power which gave it efficiency? Their word was with power, because the Spirit of the Lord spoke by them. If a polluted human spirit is freed from the bondage of corruption, who does not feel that

the power is not our own which untwists the cords of wickedness, liberates the helpless captive, and gives him moral strength and conquest? If a minister of Christ reclaims a soul from vice, and presents him before the world as a new creature, who sees not that there is no proportion between the visible cause, and the actual effect? That minister is but a man; and he speaks as a man. He bids the stormy sea be calm; he bids the prison doors open of their own accord. None but a true minister of Christ affects such power as this; and every true minister of Christ acknowledges that he has this heavenly power in an earthen vessel, and ascribes the excellency of the power only to God.

All the agents in the work of setting up and extending the kingdom of Christ are employed and qualified by God himself. Christ called his apostles, and filled them with his Spirit. No man can take this honour to himself; his vocation must be of God. Not all the human power in the world would be sufficient to make an apostle, or a modern missionary. You may find men of enterprize, men of party zeal, men of eloquence, men of learning; but the apostle, the missionary, thus formed by mere human hands, would stand, like the statue of the ancients, immovable and powerless, till animated by the fire from heaven The Apostle Paul was all this. Enterprise, eloquence, learning,—all met in him. But what was that which "constrained him," which "bore him away" to ceaseless and successful labours? Not the spirit of enterprise, but that love of Christ which was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him.

It is thus that, in the operations of the true kingdom of Christ, God has been seen to be "all in all." In every successive stage of its progress shall it be seen, that the stone is not in human hands; and so shall no flesh glory in his presence.

3. The third particular to be noticed, as to the kingdom for whose coming we pray, is its small beginnings, connected with its mighty increase. The stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

That the kingdom thus described by Daniel is that to which our Lord refers in the text, appears from this, that the same representations are given of it. The kingdom of heaven is likened to a grain of mustard seed, sown in the garden, growing, and waxing to a great tree; to the leaven, hidden in the three measures of meal, but spreading its influence, till the whole was leavened. Yes, brethren,

> "When he first the work begun,
> Small and feeble was his day."

How true was this of the age when Christ appeared in our world!—When this universal Monarch was as a servant upon earth; when all the subjects who acknowledged him were a few timid Jewish peasants and fishermen; when he stood as a criminal at the bar of the Roman prætor, every ray of majesty and glory carefully shrouded under the veil of deep humiliation; well might Pilate ask with wonder, "Art THOU then a king?" O, matter enough of contempt was it to his enemies to see, when he hung upon his cross, the taunting inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the KING of the Jews," written in three languages, that the multitudes of strangers, congregated at Jerusalem, might join

in the taunt, and spread through the earth the tale of his ridiculous pretensions. But he *was* a King, even then. Soon, and too soon for them who thus mocked him, was the nail which pierced his hand to become the sceptre of universal sway; the cross on which he hung, the throne of a boundless dominion. Even in that hour was the stone cut out of the mountain.

It has been thus in every nation which is now filled with the sound of his name, and brought under the influence of his government. What was the beginning of this kingdom in our own country? The stone was rolled there before it became a mountain. A pious individual, or at most a few, came as the heralds and messengers of their Lord; a single ray of light penetrated the deep night which rested on the land; but the light has spread, and the little stone become a mountain.

It is thus in the heart of individual man. You remember the first visitation of truth, the first faint stirring of a holy and effectual desire; and now you are yourselves the witnesses of the active and growing tendencies of the kingdom of Christ within you. He now reigns in your spirit. Your understanding bows to his decisions, your will yields to his service, his controlling power is exerted over your conscience and affections, you call him Lord with reverence, and you both love and do the things which he commands.

This stone is rolled by you into many heathen lands; and it no sooner touches them than it begins to increase. Its first apparent magnitude may, indeed, be small, and unbelief and discouragement may suggest that this stone can never fill the land. We grant all your difficulties. Power is indifferent to it, or against it. The room seems fully occupied by darkness, prejudice, obstinacy, resistance of every kind. But let doubt be silent. The stone is instinct with imperishable life, and grows by the working of almighty power. Had doubt stood over the vast expanse of chaos at creation, when God commanded that the waters should be gathered into one place, and that the dry land should appear, never would it have anticipated the result of the wondrous fiat, even when the tops of the loftiest mountains had just begun to show themselves above the waters, spotting the as yet shoreless ocean. But the word was gone forth, and Omnipotence was at work. The mighty masses were uplifted; in stern and solemn majesty they rose from the waters, and towered above the retiring waves. The dry land now appeared, where all had been restless and troubled sea.—Where the billows had swelled and tossed themselves, there the mighty hills arose, there the lovely valleys swept. In the midst of this magnificence and beauty walked man, created in the image of God.—Then the beasts of the field lay down in rich verdure, and the birds of the air found their resting place. God had commanded, and it was so.

We mean not that the kingdom of Christ shall meet with no obstruction in its progress, or that its growth shall be visibly regular and gradual. It is enough that it advances upon the whole. Our anxiety is only to determine that the mass of Christianity which we fix in heathen lands is indeed the stone which God hath cut out of the mountain It may suffer in the mighty convulsion and strife, and what man may have attached to it may be ground off in the attrition; but here is the faithful word of God: "And it became a great mountain." We are

contented to write the Divine command, "Let the dry land appear;" and the historians of the future Church shall complete the sentence, and write, "And it was so."

4. It is affirmed of this kingdom that it shall break in pieces, and destroy all others, but that itself shall continue.

The stone smote the image, and filled the earth, so that there was no room for any other power. Some persons have supposed that the kingdom of Christ would destroy all preceding empires by violent opposition, by the shouts of warriors, and by garments rolled in blood. I more than doubt this. I know that Christ has his kingdom of providence, as well as of grace; and that the operations of this kingdom are in many instances regulated in reference to his mediatorial government. As he is Lord of heaven and earth, he no doubt often visits the nations, changes the seasons, removeth and setteth up kings; but when for these purposes he employs human agency, it is not the agency of his people. The axe by which he heweth the forest of the field has not even its handle furnished by the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. The direct operations of the kingdom of grace for which we pray belong to a rule which is not of this world; nor do the servants of Christ fight for it. For if the last great monarchy were to overturn those which preceded it, as they overturned those which were before them, by exploits of arms, then is not the kingdom of Christ in any sense come. The Christian Church possesses no such apparatus of means. The stone is not in human hands, nor does it thus employ human power.—An army of real Christians fighting for Christ's cause has never yet been seen. On such a spectacle the eye of the world has never fallen; on such a spectacle it never will fall. Such worldly plans were so far from the view of Paul, that even when the image, the Roman power, was yet standing on its legs of iron, he exhorted not to hostile conflict, but to submission. Wars and revolutions belong to another dispensation, to a very different administration of almighty God, than that of the kingdom for whose coming we are taught to pray. With these, as Christians, we have nothing to do. "Let the dead bury their dead."

Others have supposed that the breaking the image in pieces intimates that all authority and power but that of Christ shall be put down; but for this we have no evidence. Against human governments, as such, not only have we nothing inimical in the Gospel, but, on the contrary, we have much that is for them. "The powers that be" are stated to be "ordained of God;" and the law of the Gospel is, that he that resisteth them "resisteth the ordinance of God." Nor shall they cease in the most splendid periods of the Church. The New Jerusalem is not the heavenly state, but the perfected millennial Church; and then, when the nations shall walk in her light, the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. There shall, of course, be earthly governments.

What, then, is the meaning of the declaration, that the stone "shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms?" Brethren, the contest is the nobler one of principles; and the breaking of the image is the glorious victory of the truth of God over all the errors and vices of man. Of these errors and vices the political powers represented in the vision were the principal patrons; and to them did they owe much of their currency and diffusion. They and the kingdom of

Christ were essentially in opposition, therefore, rather in their moral than in their civil character; in opposition, not so much as powers merely, but as powers adverse to his own holiness and truth.

A few instances will show us how entire was this opposition.

They were idolatrous. Of the kingdom for which we pray it is a first principle, that there is but one God, and but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. These kingdoms were powers of darkness and superstition. The kingdom of Christ is one of light and truth; and wisdom and knowledge are the stability of its times. They were all violent and tumultuous. His brings peace and good will; and, so far as men are under its influence, they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Of Christ, as a sovereign, it is affirmed, that he shall spare the souls of the poor and needy, and that their blood shall be precious in his sight. They were unmerciful. But his kingdom is like himself; and he still carries our infirmities, and bears our sicknesses. As the rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth, does he come upon spirits cut down by affliction and sorrow. Their rule, in reality, knew not to dispense civil blessings. His bestows these, and with them the grand objects of its administration, pardon, and holiness, and eternal life.

Between principles so opposite there must be irreconcilable hostility; and when the incumbent weight of truth presses upon the feet of the image; when, after mighty efforts, the glorious victory shall be won; when all earthly powers shall acknowledge God, making his laws the rule and measure of their own; when the poor every where find mercy, and want is in all places relieved, and ignorance instructed; when wars cease to the ends of the earth, and the chariot, and the bow, and the spear, are burned in the fire; when Divine truth is every where embraced and honoured, and its influence every where exerted;—then shall the image, the representation of idolatrous, dark violent, oppressive, and unmerciful power, be overturned and broken in pieces, which the wind shall carry away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, so that no place shall be found for them. Then shall the stone, thus become a great mountain, fill the whole earth. The kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. By him shall kings reign, and princes decree justice. His Spirit shall animate, his laws govern all. Then shall he be acknowledged as supreme Lord, whose "kingdom shall not be left to other people, but shall stand for ever."

Having endeavoured to explain the nature of that kingdom for the coming of which we are directed to pray, let us,

II. Consider the instruction conveyed to us by this petition being made a part of the daily prayers of the Church throughout all ages.

1. We are instructed that the kingdom of Christ is still unestablished. It is still future, and therefore an object of prayer.

While Christ was upon earth he was a king without a kingdom.—When he rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, he went to receive it. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a king, that went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Till he returns, then, the work is not accomplished, and the interval is to be filled with vast and varied operations. Nor is there any subject upon

which human thought can fall that is so deeply interesting. We take our books of history, and admire the march of merely earthly powers to the climax of their grandeur; and we must own the spectacle to be magnificent and instructive. The population swells; new and untrodden fields display the labours of cultivation; cities rise; armies are formed; battles are won; men of high and commanding minds are seen in the loftiness of operation, and the variety of fortune; arts impress their skill and beauty on every object; and science adorns and immortalizes the whole. But, magnificent as all this is, what is there even of grandeur in it, compared with the march of Christ's kingdom, and the operations which it excites? The field of strife is not a country, but the world. The combatants on one side are God, Christ, saints, truth, and holiness; and on the other, they are devils, wicked men, error, and vice. What conflicts there are in the heart of man between flesh and spirit! What fights of affliction have been endured by the saints, who were stoned, sawn asunder, burned with fire! What exhibitions of character have been witnessed in this warfare! what malice and wretchedness in the enemies of Christ! what charity, patience, and heroism in the saints! What controversies of opinion have been excited! error in all its forms; truth in everlasting conflict with it.—What kingdoms have been overturned in this strife! What glories of the world have passed away! What souls have been crowned with everlasting life! What myriads have sunk into endless wo! What an interest is at issue,—the ruin or the recovery of a world! Now the stone rolls on; now it is arrested in its progress; now you hear the glorious crash of idols and of temples under its rolling weight. Now the operation appears suspended, and the faction of this world triumphs. We are in the midst of this strife. The kingdom of Christ is in progress; but it has not yet come. Of late the stone has been rolling on; and it beats now with new activity upon the stubborn materials which oppose its course; upon the gold, the silver, the brass, the iron, the clay: but was there ever much greater reason for the Church to pray with all her fervour, "Thy kingdom come?" Even in Christian lands, how much remains to be subdued to Christ! Yes; in our very hearts, in our neighbourhood, in our country. Go to other parts of Christendom, and you will perceive that still

"Small and feeble is his day."

Visit the heathen world, and behold the contest in a great part to be not even begun. There are regions where Christ is not even named. The kingdom of light is not come. This sad fact is witnessed by whole nations that still sit in darkness. The kingdom of peace is not yet come. This actual wars, or their principles, which are pent up with difficulty, and ready to rush forth every moment, abundantly testify. The kingdom of love and purity is not yet come. This the blood, and terror, and pollution of paganism still witness. Your daily prayers, then, call your attention to the sad state of the world, yet in opposition to Christ; and that state demands the constant ardour of the petition.

2. We are taught by the prayer of the text that the complete establishment of the kingdom of Christ is an object of desire.

It is so for many reasons; and it must be so as long as principles of the most powerfully operative kind influence the hearts of Christians.

Love to Christ renders the full establishment of his kingdom an object of desire. It is not possible to love Christ, and not to grieve that he is unknown or dishonoured. The first emotion of love to him swells the heart with desire to make him known; to call all to behold his glories; to bring all to do homage at his feet.

Love to souls renders it so. He who sees a man unacquainted with Christ, or an enemy to him, and is not filled with grief and pity, believes not the testimony of Scripture concerning "the terrors of the Lord." He who truly believes cannot but love and pity; and when millions are in danger, then he breathes forth the prayer, "O that the salvation of Israel were come forth out of Zion!"

Humanity renders it so. Vice at home, and idolatry abroad, inflict evils so deep and deadly upon human interests, that as long as sympathy softens the heart, and pity moistens the eye, our earnest desire will be directed to the great Deliverer.

The glories of the Church render it so. Is the Church loved? Then the reign of Christ will be desired. When that reign shall be fully established, the glory of the Lord shall arise upon the Church; the errors which have darkened her glories shall be swept away; the mixtures of vice, which have weakened her, shall give place to moral soundness, and unimpaired health; all her ordinances shall be filled with rich effusions of the Holy Spirit; her priests shall be clothed with righteousness, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy; her walls shall be called Salvation, and her gates Praise.

Interest in the accomplishment of the most stupendous scheme of wisdom and mercy renders it so. We cannot be indifferent if we rightly think and feel upon this subject. If Abraham, at so great a distance, desired to see the day of Christ, and rejoiced to discern its glories through ages of darkness and tumults, how ought our hearts to swell with desire when it has approached nearer; when the splendours of the latter-day glory begin already to flame; when the morning breaks, and the shadows fly? You say, perhaps, that you shall not witness it; and that you shall die before its full manifestation. You must; but if you have loved and desired it on earth, you will witness it in heaven. Then, when you have no other occupation, you shall bend with angels over the scene; you shall see the seed spring up which we now sow; trace the steps of future missionaries on more distant mountains, publishing peace; the successive submissions of nations; the glorious "flow," as the prophet expresses it, of Jews and Gentiles into the Church; the world at rest; the Saviour God crowned and installed in universal power; all nations blessed in him, and every tongue of every land calling him blessed.

3. This petition is put into our prayers to remind us of the duty of co-operating with Christ in the establishment of his kingdom.

The duty of prayer supposes the duty of working together with God. He who would content himself with praying for the coming of Christ's kingdom, without exerting himself to promote it, ought to content himself with praying for his daily bread, without using the requisite means to obtain it. The very principles which dictate the prayer, which surround it with all the feelings of the heart, when it is not formal and hypocritical, are the very feelings which urge to the greatest exertions.

We have mentioned the love of Christ: but love cannot be inactive.

It is the stirring principle of exertion comprehensive as itself, and "never faileth."

We mentioned love to souls. And is there a man on earth who even pretends to love the immortal souls of his fellow men, and yet uses no means to save those souls from death? If he be negligent in the means. he never fails to lament the deficiency of the principle.

We mentioned humanity. Behold how active a principle this is See it in a Howard, who plunged into every prison in Europe; who made a circumnavigation of charity, to lighten the chain of the felon, and convey light and air into his dungeon.

The connection between the true spirit of prayer, and vigorous exertion, is indissoluble. Who spent whole nights in prayer, but He that went about doing good? Who prayed for the primitive Churches day and night with tears? The man who filled the vast extent of the Roman empire with the sound of salvation. The prayer which leads to no exertion is not that of the heart. The man who works not in this cause ought to blot this petition out of the prayer taught him by his Lord; and not this only, but many others. It is hypocrisy in him to say, "*Our* Father," when he means only *my* Father, and would make a monopoly of God himself; to say, "Hallowed be thy name," when he cares not by how many millions it is profaned; to say, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," when he is utterly careless respecting it; when he would suffer that will to be disregarded rather than part with his money, his time, his talent: to him is denied the fine buoyant swell of desire which gives breath and life to the prayer, "Thy kingdom come;" nor can he terminate his devotions with, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," who has not a soul to anticipate, nor an eye to rest upon, the glories of the age when the desire shall be fulfilled; when the prophecy shall be accomplished; when the anticipation shall be converted into fact and history.

He who hath said, "After this manner pray ye, Thy kingdom come," hath also said, "My son, go work to-day in my vineyard;" and will finally say to every negligent man, "O thou wicked and slothful servant!"

On the other hand, the petition is intended to remind us, that every thing we do in the work of Christ is to be done in prayer; and that the most active measures can only be sanctified and rendered successful by it. If God is any where to be acknowledged, it is here. In this work God is to be all in all.

You aim at the conversion of the world. It is well; but know that God who willeth all men to be saved, willeth also that prayers, and supplications, and intercessions should be made for all men. You are anxious to see the world filled with missionaries; but remember the words of your great Teacher, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth labourers into his harvest." You send them forth; but remember that he who knew the nature and difficulties of the work, hath said, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." The petition in the text sends us to our work; our work sends us back to the petition.

4. The prayer of the text has instructed the Church in all ages never to despair of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

This is indeed a most important view of the subject He who knew

the times and seasons, whose eye sees the end from the beginning, has not set the subject before us as a matter of probability, but of absolute certainty. In his expression there is nothing equivocal, nothing hesitating; and the certainty of speaking with him who knew all things, proves the certainty of the thing declared; for he could not be deceived, nor could he deceive. His infinite prescience is the guard against the one; his infinite purity guarantees the other. Yet when he was in appearance a peasant, when he was despised and rejected of men, this he holds up to the hopes, and prayers, and faith of his people, "Thy kingdom come."

This petition, too, was intended as the constant pledge to the Church in the darkest times, that the cause of Christ should ultimately triumph. Driven into deserts; yet the deserts have resounded the expression of the Church's faith and hope, "Thy kingdom come." Great leaders, pillars of the Church, have been racked and stoned; and yet they never thought that the cause would perish with them. Amidst all their sufferings, and even when they were dying, "after this manner" they prayed, "Thy kingdom come." St. Peter, so distinguished among the apostles, wrote an epistle at the close of life; but never did he indulge the suspicion that the cause would sink with him. On the contrary, he cries, quoting the words of the prophet, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you," 1 Peter i, 24, 25. St. Paul who could look round upon more ample success than any other man,—who could say, "Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place,"—who saw by the Spirit of prophecy a great falling away, the revelation of the man of sin,—had learned from the prayer, that the kingdom of God should come; and adds, "Whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his appearing." In the same spirit the venerable Latimer exclaimed to his fellow sufferer in the martyr's fire, "Courage, brother Ridley; we shall light up such a flame in England this day as shall never be extinguished!"

With this prayer will your missionaries go forth. It is true, they must labour, and meet with discouragement; but their daily prayers will support their daily faith. Nor shall we despair. Our daily prayer shall minister to our daily faith; and, if we faint for a moment, when "after this manner" we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we shall blush at our unbelief, and be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

Lastly, we are taught by this prayer to expect its daily influence upon our own hearts. That kingdom, in answer to prayer, will come to us with all its blessedness and power, and our interest in its universal establishment will become increasingly intense and influential.

SERMON XLVI.—*Religious Worship.*

"For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him," Psalm xlv, 11.

IT has been said by many that acts of worship are only of human device; but, even though we found no express declaration on the subject in Scripture, this would not be a just conclusion. Without an original and Divine injunction, it is impossible to conceive how worship should ever have been thought acceptable to God; that so great a being could be moved by our prayers; so full and sufficient a being, by our praises. And the case is rendered the more striking by the fact, that the most ancient mode of worship was always by sacrifices; a fact this, inexplicable, but on the supposition of a Divine injunction. If it had been a matter of merely probable inference, how came it that all people, in all ages, arrived at the same conclusion? This universality is another proof that in the first times the great, the delightful fact was authoritatively made known, that God would be worshipped by man. And, when once made known, then have we the most affecting proof of the Divine condescension. In the institution of worship we have the encouraging declaration, that God may be sought, that God may be found.

In calling your attention to this subject more particularly, I shall lead you to consider the nature, the reason, and the importance of religious worship.

I. Its nature.

The subject presents itself in two branches.

1. Its internal principles.

There must be reverence. And here, this must be in the highest degree, because of the greatness of its object. Such reverence as implies, not indeed terror, but sacred awe, accompanied by acquiescence and delight. Only a mind changed from its natural state is capable of this. It is not mere sentiment; not a partial delight in some only of the perfections of God. The feeling refers to the whole of the Divine nature and character; to the justice and holiness of God, to his supreme dominion, as well as to his wisdom and mercy.

And as we are sinful creatures, there must be another principle; that deep humiliation which implies self displacence and abhorrence. The fine parable of the Pharisee and the publican is designed to show us how much out of place in Divine worship, and how offensive to God, is the feeling of self satisfaction and complacency. Many examples of this abasement of soul before God occur in Scripture. There is Abraham, on whom "a horror of great darkness fell," and who saw and confessed himself to be "but dust and ashes!" Jacob, after the vision which declared to him the Divine presence, exclaimed, being afraid, "How dreadful is this place!" Thus said Manoah to his wife: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." And thus Isaiah: "Wo is me, for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Peter, feeling the presence of Divinity, exclaimed, "Depart from me, O Lord!" And John, beholding the glorious vision in the isle of his banishment, "fell at his feet as one dead." This is not

the feeling or the language of angels or glorified saints. It is only to be accounted for by referring it to the deep sense of sin and unworthiness which the sight of God brought to their mind. So will the very thought of God, the recollection that we are in his immediate presence, prostrate and humble us, if we worship him aright. The sensible effect may not be so great, but the character of the feeling will be the same.

Another principle of worship for fallen man must be, trust in atonement. No acceptable worship ever was presented but through sacrifice. The history of Cain and Abel illustrates this. And thus is it now. All access to God is by the recognized sacrifice of Christ. Whatsoever things we ask in prayer must be in the name of Christ, believing in him.

Then there must be submission. For a rebel to worship is only mockery. What is it but to say, "Hail," to the Sovereign whom in his heart he despises and rejects. This principle is very comprehensive. It supposes that we yield ourselves up to be ruled by the Divine will absolutely and universally; that we take our measure of good and evil from him; that we are willing to have our place assigned us, higher or lower as may be pleasing to him; that we are ready for his service, as it may please him to call us to it. So when Isaiah saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," he saw the attendant seraphim, each with two wings covering his feet, and with two his face, and with two prepared to fly. There were they, engaged in reverential worship, but with their wings plumed and vibrating, ready, without delay, to engage in commanded service,—"and with twain he did fly."

Another principle is love. Gratitude for past mercies must be there, but not gratitude only. Supreme affection is required; and delight in Divine goodness; always ardently seeking communion with God; unwearied in spirit, even though the flesh be weak.

2. I notice, but briefly, its external manifestations.

And here we have

Acts. As prayer, by which we seek for blessings;—thanksgiving, by which we acknowledge them;—commemoration, recounting the goodness, the mercy, the glorious acts of the Lord, of which we have so many instances in the Psalms; and this may be either in prose or verse;—sitting before the Lord to hear his word, which is a real act of worship, and not, as is sometimes thoughtlessly said, to be distinguished from it;—and sitting to meditate on his truth, of which we have so impressive an example in David.

Places. There is the closet;—and the family;—and the church, or select assembly; for we are to "teach and admonish one another;"—and the great assembly.

II. The ground and reason of worship are now to be considered.—And these are suggested to us by the text itself, "For he is thy Lord."

1. This declares to us the Divine greatness; for the Lord of the Church is Lord of all; and, if so, the highest views are presented of his grandeur and glory.

Take all creatures; and as he has created them, he is their Lord. Till he gave them being, they were not. And if he thus made them out of nothing, then whatever of goodness or excellence they possess, it all proceeded from himself. Sum up all the particulars of creature glory; collect it into one mass; it is all from him; and he who could

impart so much, has yet more in himself. The excellence of the finite proves the infinite. We can set no limits in our minds to Him whose power calls into being that which was not; and thus, infinity, in all its heights and depths, forces itself upon us. Existing from eternity; existing every where; himself independent, while all other beings depend on him; every natural, every moral perfection, possessed by him, infinitely beyond what even angels can conceive;—if worship implies reverence and sacred awe, surely this is He to whom worship belongs. If we cannot advert to the vastness of natural objects, to the loftiness and power of created spirits, without an impression very like a reverent homage, how specially and peculiarly is that feeling raised into an act of worship which acknowledges that all this, and far greater glory is in himself, and for himself, and to be shared by no other.—And thus is it an act of duty that we turn aside to see this great sight, and that we give to God the sole glory of what he is in and from himself alone.

2. As he is our Lord, he stands to us in the relation of an absolute dominion.

That dominion extends to our being, and to all by which our being can be supported. We ourselves, our family, our country, our world, are all under his sway. Our life is given, supported, terminated by him. All the blessings of life are by him distributed, withheld, restricted, or multiplied, or withdrawn. Our felicity is from the light of his countenance; our pain from the pressure of his hand. He can connect our immortality with bliss or wo. We must live for ever; for so he has appointed; and to him it belongs to appoint what that eternal existence shall be; whether it shall be spent in happiness or wretchedness. If worship implies prayer, we see the reason for it in his boundless dominion, his absolute lordship. To him, the great Lord of all, should our prayer be addressed, that we may secure his friendship, and that all may go well with us.

3. He is our Lord legislatively.

Consider well what this implies, and see to what it leads. As our all-wise Creator, he had an end, a design, in our creation, and, consequently, a will concerning us. This supposes that we are bound to act according to that will, and in no other way. As he is holy and good, his will must refer to a holy and felicitous course of action. And in proportion to the wisdom, holiness, and goodness of this, must he be bound by the perfection of his own character, to guard his law, the expression of his will, from violation. This he has done. The law is sanctioned by the penalty of eternal death. Now, we have sinned against him, and thus do we stand in relation to his law and himself, as guilty and condemned sinners. If, then, we have offended this our sovereign Lord; and if worship implies penitence and confession, here is another reason why we should worship. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, "Take away all iniquity." Be this your resolution, "I will arise and go to my Father." And since he has himself set forth the sacrifice with which he will be propitiated, and for the sake of which he will forgive, take that sacrifice in the hands of faith and present it before him, and let your worship be an act of penitent trust, and confiding prayer.

4. But to the Church may it be specially said, "He is thy Lord."

The true Church is a society arising from the fact of actual reconciliation to God by Christ Jesus. This is the real principle which associates the people of God into one body. The world is guilty and alienated. The Church is the separated company of pardoned believers. To this company he stands in the special relation of a gracious Sovereign. And here we find another ground of the worship of the Church. There is praise to him for his goodness, for his "saints shall bless him." There is trust in his everlasting mercy; for it is remembered, "He hath graven us on the palms of his hands." And there is the thankful recognition of all his mighty and marvellous interpositions. The Israelites recounted their history in solemn psalms, and so do we. We sing the triumphs of apostles, the constancy of martyrs, the downfall of ancient systems of idolatry, the zeal of reformers, the preservation of the holy seed, the effusions of his Spirit, the revivals of his work. These all are parts of the solemn worship of the Church. And it is prayer to him, as head and Lord, for present blessings. The manifestation of his presence in religious assemblies is sought; the continuance of the ministry of the word, and of his benediction upon it; the continued preservation of his people; and the increase and the final extension of his Church to the end of the world. And, as all is thus expected from him by his people, so do they give him all the glory from age to age. Unto him there is glory given in the Church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages.

III. The importance of worship.

I might refer you to proofs of the importance of both private and social worship; but as these are closely connected with public worship, to that I shall chiefly confine myself.

1. The first obvious instance of its importance is, that wherever there is true worship, there the great fundamental truths of religion are proclaimed before the world.

This, therefore, has ever been felt to be a duty. Good men have struggled, not for mere freedom of opinion, but of worship. Had they been contented with a silent secession from existing corruptions, they might have escaped much persecution. But no. They had heard the command, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." They knew that they were called to an aggressive movement against the ignorance and viciousness which surrounded them, and therefore they could not rest till the altar of God was built against the altar of Baal, and till truth should lift up her voice in her own temples. And wherever the Church worships, there the voice of truth is heard. Is it in a heathen land? The true God, even he who made heaven and earth, is proclaimed. Is it among those who deny the Godhead of her Lord? All her services proclaim him to be the true God, and eternal life. Is it among the deniers of atonement? Her faith ever tells of the altar of the perfect Sacrifice, and the smoke of his atonement fills her courts. Is the work of the Spirit denied? The worship of the Church declares him to be the Lord and the giver of life. Are these services rendered in the midst of nominal professors, devoid of the power of godliness? They proclaim that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The warning voice of coming judgment sounds from her courts to alarm the flagrantly wicked. The scenes are unveiled which guilt itself cannot contemplate without awe:

and the great white throne, and He who sits upon it, and the dead, small and great, standing before him for judgment, are all presented, and the flashes of eternity are thrown upon the darkness of the world. The very sacraments of the Church impressively describe the alienation of man, and the covenant mercies of God; they figure the washing of regeneration, or "show forth the Lord's death till he come." Thus does the worship of the Church keep those truths in continual remembrance which the world most needs to know, and is most in danger of forgetting.

2. A second note of its importance is, that true Christian worship secures the constant publication of the word of God.

This is always connected with the worship of the Christian Church, formed, in this respect, on the model of the synagogue, which included both public prayer and the reading and exposition of the sacred Scriptures. Mark, then, the advantage of this. Does any one neglect that word at home? It is here sounded in his ears. Or does he read without understanding it? It is here explained and enforced. Is any one unreconciled? Here is found the ambassador to propose the terms of reconciliation, and to urge submission and acceptance. Comes there in one with a wounded spirit? Here the exceeding great and precious promises are set forth, to comfort all that mourn. Are any in danger of lowering the standard of truth and holiness? It is here exhibited and maintained. Do you come bound with sorrows and the afflictions of life? Here are they who have it in command to say, "Comfort ye my people, saith your God." How great the influence of Divine truth is, thus presented in the assemblies of Christian worshippers, will only then be known when it shall appear how numerous that Church is which has been "sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water, by the word."

3. A third important consideration is, that in the public assemblies of the Church, there is the special presence of God.

"I have seen thee," says Lord Bacon, "in thy works, and sought thee in thy providences, but I have found thee in thy temples." Of this presence the tabernacle and temple furnished the type and symbol. This presence, indeed, not like that which shone from the mercy seat, is invisible; but it is mighty in its workings. If you are true worshippers, you come where God himself is to be found. Not the mere light of doctrinal truth is here, but the spiritual light which quickens and saves. It is not an approach to God with the lips only, an acknowledgment of his omnipresence, but a real approach of the heart to him, and a manifestation of himself to the heart. You come, not only to hear of pardon, and peace, and strength, but to receive and enjoy them. Nor is this confined to place or number, but wherever two or three meet together in the name of Christ he is present with them.

4. Public worship, again, both presents to us the most perfect type of heaven on earth, and furnishes an efficient preparation for it.

The world is shut out. Our sole business is now with God. We think of his lovingkindness. We draw near to gaze, and we grow more and more like him. We feel the communion of saints. We join with the many in adoring and blessing him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb slain for man's redemption.

In conclusion,

1. Let us feel it our duty to uphold his worship. As servants of the Lord most high, and zealous for his glorious name, we are bound not only to a regular and devout personal attendance upon the ordinances of God's house; but to assist in extending the advantages of Christian worship to others, by every means in our power. The consecration of property to these objects is at once a privilege and a duty.

2. Let us know and feel the evil of a careless, formal service.—"God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He complains of those who draw near to him and honour him with their lips while their hearts are far from him. To him all hearts are open, and all desires known; and without faith, and other gracious and devout affections, it is impossible to please him. A careless and formal service is the height of presumption.

3. Let us be ourselves increasingly spiritual in worship, preserving the spirit of devotion amidst all the engagements and trials of life; so shall we never be denied the blessed privilege of access to the throne of the heavenly grace; and in the manifested love of God, we shall enjoy a heaven upon earth.

SERMON XLVII.—*The Gain of the World and the Loss of the Soul.*

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi, 26.

THE world is full of cares. From the highest condition to the lowest, the hearts of men wither with anxieties, or beat with the strong impulses of restless passion and insatiable desire. Unhappily, we know only too well, that of all cares, the care of the soul is the most infrequent; and that desire is awakened, not by heavenly realities, but by earthly trifles.

My brethren, we are placed here to call your attention to subjects of infinite moment, to excite in you, by God's blessing, a higher and better class of feelings; in a word, to awaken you to the most lively concern for the welfare and safety of that which some of you have utterly disregarded, and about which we have none of us sufficiently cared,—that is, to a lively concern for the welfare and safety of your own deathless soul.

This is my office to-night; and I wish, therefore, to call your attention, in the most solemn and affectionate manner, to these words of our Lord. They were, indeed, spoken on a particular occasion; but their application is universal. He saw his disciples in danger of shunning the cross to avoid temporary pain, or to gain the world's temporary friendship. "He that saveth his life shall lose it," in the deeper sense of losing himself,—his soul, which is his true life. "And he that loseth his life shall find it," in the higher sense of the everlasting security of his soul. He impresses the whole on their conscience, by the powerful appeal which the two questions in the text contain. "For what

is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Our present subject, therefore, is, the worth and danger of the soul; and the solemn instruction which this view of the case is intended to convey.

I. We are led by the text to reflect upon the value of the soul.

So deep an interest have we in its safety, that, if this be not secured, the gain even of the whole world would leave us infinitely the losers.

But how shall we impress our hearts with this? Habituated as we have been to undervalue that precious gem that we carry in our bosoms, and which is beyond all price, how shall we so conceive of the subject as to produce a better sentiment? Think, then,

1. Upon the unlimited intellectual capacities of the soul.

This is the only being on earth to which intellectual excellence can be ascribed. Matter is limited by laws which, after due investigation, are discovered, and then the boundaries are fixed. Animals may have some mimickry of reason, but very faint and limited. Turn now to the soul of man. Contracted as it may be by ignorance, and debased as it is by a vile use of its faculties, its capacity remains the same. And here, I speak not of those distinguished minds which have collected so largely just apprehensions of things, and digested them into systems of useful science; whose thought travels over the extent of so many interesting subjects, and, like the sun, which sends its rays to the ends of the earth, can expatiate in the vast universe itself. I speak now of all, and I point you to the sources of holy and saving knowledge which Christianity opens to all. There are the works of God, the ways of God, the distinctions between good and evil, the grand mysteries of our redemption, all the glories of a better state;—subjects, these, which enlarge the mind, while they fill it, and may thus prepare for new communications on these and other subjects of grandeur and loveliness through the ages of eternity.

Now, is this a being to be slighted and despised? Is this bright mirror, thus capable of reflecting in clearness and perfection every object brought before it, to be dimmed and defaced? and this bright light of the intellect of God to be plunged into the darkness of moral ignorance here, and the very "blackness of the darkness" of perdition hereafter? But think,

2. Upon the moral as well as the intellectual capacity of your nature.

I grant you see nothing but selfishness and sin; yet the very capacity of evil indicates the natural capacity of good. Satan had not been devil, had he not first been angel. Man had not fallen so low, had he not been created so high. Is there a virtue of which we can conceive, which, when planted in a renewed heart, and watered by Divine influence, has not flourished there, often with a beauty and fragrance which have savoured more of heaven than of earth? Devotion, which walks humbly with God; faith, which sees Him who is invisible, and so defies a world in arms; charity, which sympathizes with all misery; meekness, unruffled by insults; generosity, forgiving all injuries; zeal, never wearied in doing good; purity, unstained by temptation. What, by the grace of God, has been in man already, may be again in you. And I ask, therefore, whether a soul, thus ca-

pable of all the strength and beauty of holiness, a bright, though finite, image of the adorable holiness and benevolence of the Creator, ever advancing in purity and knowledge, is to be neglected as a thing of nought? Think,

3. On the capacity which the soul possesses for high and hallowed enjoyment.

Some of you, it may be, know but little of this. You have never tasted of pleasures above those administered by sense or vanity;—pleasures which perish in the using, and which, like the scent of certain flowers, speedily become ungratifying and vapid. I might, however, remark, that even these, feeble as they are, yet, when not stained by direct evil, show you, that no sentient being on earth is capable of pleasures so high and varied as man. But what are impulses given to the feelings in comparison to the solid satisfaction of exerting our faculties on the noblest subjects? to the paradise which springs up within us when we taste the joys of the salvation of God? to the rich feeling of a quiet and sprinkled conscience? to the elevation of the soul in prayer and praise? to the comfort which springs from the hope of heaven, when, as God is the great source of happiness, and a finite creature cannot enjoy him who is infinite at once, but only in eternal succession, the happiness of the redeemed must endure and advance to all eternity? If, then, I again appeal to you, so many sources of deep and hallowed pleasure are opened to you on earth, and all leading to His presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore, shall you neglect to bring your soul to these living fountains? and is that immortal spirit in you, thus capable of God, worthy your attention, or is it not? Think,

4. On the singular care of God to recover the soul from its lost condition.

Is it an unimpressive view of this Divine care which shows that the plan of our redemption was laid down in eternity, as though it were the favourite plan of heaven itself? that though it involved the gift and death of the everlasting Son of the Father; yet still "God so loved the world, that he gave" this, "his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" that our Saviour fulfilled this, the will and counsel of the Father and himself,—the counsel of tender, illimitable love,—at the expense of the deepest degradations, and the very agonies of suffering? that the Holy Spirit is continually engaged in carrying into effect this glorious design of saving human souls; by his secret calls, his powerful influences, inspiring them with holy thoughts, pressing them by urgent motives, striving with their obstinacy, and, when they yield, dwelling in them to guard them from danger, shedding upon them hallowing and refreshing influences to complete the work of their salvation; taking charge of them, like a skilful pilot, and never quitting them till he has safely placed them in a quiet haven of a better state? that the word of God opens to us its treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and presents its potent motives, to be the light of wandering souls, that they may perceive and enter upon the way of peace? that ministers are appointed to persuade you to be reconciled to God? and that the Church stands with her array of beautiful and impressive ordinances, the mother and the instructress of souls, to educate and train them up for a better life?

O our God! can we reflect on all this care of thine for us, without feeling that we have criminally neglected, and counted as worthless, what thou thyself hast thought of so much value as to employ all these vast counsels to save, and for the redemption of which no less a price was paid than the price of thy Son our Saviour's most precious blood?

Shall I now add another consideration, inferior, I grant you, to that on which I have just been dwelling,—for that is chief of all,—yet one certainly not without its weight? Think, then,

5. On the ardour with which beings not directly interested enter into the case of the final destiny of the soul of man.

What are men to angels? If man loses his felicity, his loss effects not them. And yet there is joy among them when a sinner repenteth. They carry the soul which has triumphed over death into Abraham's bosom, although it may be the soul of a Lazarus. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, pitching their tents about the tabernacles of the just.

What are men to devils? Were all men saved, the punishment of these lost spirits would not be changed for better or worse; yet go they about to deceive and to destroy. Brethren, man is the prize for heaven to glory in, and his loss gives malignant pleasure to hell. Heaven feeds its adorations with the gain, and hell its malice with the loss, of human souls. If the universe thus struggles for us, if light and darkness, heaven and hell, put forth their energies to save or to destroy, shall we ourselves sleep? Shall we alone dream that our immortal soul is not worthy a thought, and that its eternal salvation demands not a struggle?

II. The second part of our subject is, the danger of the soul. It is in danger of being lost; lost, by infliction of legal punishment; and mulcted, and deprived of all its happiness and hope.

Come, then, my brethren, lest any of us should fall into this depth of unextinguishable wretchedness, let us contemplate the case of a lost soul; that, seeing the danger of your own, you may trifle with it no longer.

1. To such a soul the world is lost.

Yes, brethren; that same world, for whose sake our Saviour foresaw that some would be traitors to his cause, and deny himself; that same world, for the cares, and pleasures, and riches of which, so many have neglected, so many are still neglecting, their undying souls: and what profits it them now?

Where are the smiles of the world, for which they gave up their seriousness, and renounced their religious habits? Alas! the soul which was allured by these has now left the world, and has its habitation fixed in another. Where now the cares which were allowed to eat out the superior care of the soul? There is no device in the grave; no buying, selling, building, planning, for a soul in the world of spirits, intent only on its own wretchedness, and looking for the judgment to come. Where now the pleasures which allured them from Christ? The scene has vanished. The blaze of straw has burned out. The sparks are all dissipated; and the miserable, desolated spirit is left to lie down in sorrow. And where are their gains? These, perhaps, were unjustly pursued, even in life; and, at all events, at the expense of their souls. Wherever they are, they are not here with

these poor, undone, wretched, and naked spirits. Whoever has them, they who lost their souls for them have them not.

2. To such a one the grace of God is lost.

It is so even in the form of restraining grace. Nor is this, in the case of a lost spirit, an unimportant consideration. Here the evils to which we should otherwise be exposed are greatly mitigated by the restraints put on the evil passions of men. Take away all fear of God, all checks of conscience, all respect to public opinion, all shame, —and these are the effects of restraining grace,—and the world would instantly be filled with tumult and violence, vice and misery. The same change would take place in every heart. Every chained evil, every guilty passion, every unquiet temper, would then break loose, and convert the human spirit into a cave of stormy, black, and direful emotions. Such must be the case, individually, with every lost spirit; and when you consider the whole society, you cannot have a more dreadful picture. No benevolence, no kindness, no charity, can be found there; but wrath, envy, malice, fury, boiling in every bosom. Companions in sin shall be companions in the common and fearful misery; and those who here smiled each other into vicious pleasures shall there hate and torment each other on that very account.

If the loss of restraining grace be so fearful, what, then, must be the loss of saving grace? *That* is lost. No one is sent into that prison to preach deliverance to its captives. No acceptable year of the Lord, no day of salvation, shall ever mark the chronology of their eternity. The door is shut; the bolt is driven; the seal is placed upon it, stamped with the broad and visible characters of God's eternal and immutable justice.

3. To a soul lost, it is a terrible aggravation of all this, that, not only is punishment inflicted, but heaven itself is lost.

For the carnal, worldly mind on earth, indeed, heaven has no attractions; and therefore is the soul neglected. The glorious prize glitters; but such as these will not run for it. But now that it is lost, will it not be seen under other and very different aspects? O yes! Suppose a lost spirit in the separate state to discern some glimpse of the glories of that world of joy, shining like a remote star; suppose it to catch some murmurs of the distant song which the redeemed in heaven will raise, as the voice of many waters; instantly, and keenly, and irresistibly, would this strike a new pang into the feelings. "The glory of that distant world I can now never enter; for the great gulf is fixed. In those sounds I can never join; my sad employ, alas! is weeping and wailing. While away from heaven I find no relief; and I can never enter there. In that bright world, all is love; here, every one hates, and is hateful to all the rest. There, pain never enters; here, pain is never absent. There, are only the good; here, only the evil. Ah! wretch, that I should have preferred earth and sin to the glorious prize, when I might have secured it. Yes; and I have friends there. A venerable father, whose counsels I despised; a mother, whose early instructions I trampled under foot; friends, who would have led my feet into the way of peace; ministers, whose warnings and entreaties I contemned. O I might now have been with them, and with the glorified Church universal, and with the glorified and glorifying Saviour himself! But the door is shut. I sold my birthright for a mess of pottage; and

even should "I seek it carefully and with tears," never, never can it be restored!

4. This leads me to another view of this sad case, that the loss of the soul is the loss of hope.

This I have already supposed. For the proof, I need go no farther than the text: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul," to buy it back, as the price of its redemption? Probably our Lord alludes to a passage in the Psalms: "The redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." The question teaches us that there is no redemption in hell. The very form of speaking employed by our Lord shows us this. He uses the word "life" in a two-fold sense, for the life of the body, and that of the soul; and thus intimates that it is as impossible to redeem the soul, once lost, as to restore life to the body after death.

If all this be included in the loss of the soul,—and, indeed, infinitely more is included than we can express or conceive,—then let us now,

III. Ponder those points of instruction which this view of the case was intended to impress on our hearts.

1. We are taught that this may be the case with each one of you, individually.

This is not a danger to which others only are exposed, but you, you, your own selves. And that you may be impressed by it, survey the dangers which environ you.

Consider that high but awful endowment of your nature, freedom of will. If you determine right, well. But this supposes that you may determine otherwise; and if so, you are lost. Now, which of you can be confident? If angels, if man in innocence, chose sin and misery, the same possibility, surely, hangs over you.

Consider, also, that the probability of this is alarmingly heightened by your fall; your corrupt judgment, your perverse will. They had the enemy only without; you have the enemy within also.

Consider the number of your temptations. So numerous, that many of them shall be adapted to your evil nature; many well fitted to attack you on the weakest side; temptations addressed to sense, to imagination, to pride, to worldliness, to sloth, to unbelief, to presumption; all calculated to paralyze your most solemn resolutions.

Consider, farther, that all these temptations find nature prone to yield, while all contrary dispositions, and opposing efforts, find a foe in nature itself, so that there is a warfare all the way through.

Consider, too, how often you have sinned and fallen already; and that this has been in opposition to clear light, and repeated and firm resolve. Ah! how often, when thou hast, perhaps, thought the warfare over, hast thou been assailed, conquered, enchained, and led in triumph, by thine insulting and relentless enemy!

Consider how many, once in the same condition as yourselves, with all the offers, all the helps, which are vouchsafed to you, are lost already, are now lifting up their eyes in hell, being in torment.

If this be the real state of things, then are you engaged in no petty warfare. A deep, solemn feeling of danger ought to possess your spirit. This affecting, this terrible loss may be yours, nay, certainly will be yours, unless you apply all care and diligence to avoid it.

2. We are taught that the opposite gain is put into our power

Eternal salvation is not merely possible; it is certain, if we are but determined on its attainment. Had not this been so, how vain had been our Lord's warnings and exhortations! Why, indeed, did he die, but to save us? Yes, blessed Redeemer, it was that estimate which thou didst take of our danger, and of all that is implied in the loss of the soul, which led thee to shed thy precious blood for our ransom; and, great as are our dangers, provision is made against them all, by the rich distributions of thy grace.

Thus, therefore, if we are cautioned by fear, we are also abundantly encouraged by hope.

True, our wills are inclined to evil; but God worketh in us to will and to do. True, our temptations are numerous; but so are our cautions, and restraints, and assistances. True, to temptations our nature is prone to yield; but within our reach is a new nature, which shall spurn at them, and conquer them. True, we have a subtle adversary; but we have likewise, in the Holy Spirit, at once the kindest, the mightiest friend. True, we have often fallen; but God is able both to raise us up, and make us to stand. True, many are lost; but not the less true is it that many are saved. Look at the preparations for judgment. You see an immense multitude, which no man can number, standing accepted before the throne. Victors as they now are, they were once tempted and weak as ourselves.

Yes, brethren; God wills to save us; and if our wills but heartily consent with his, soon, spite of all this danger, we shall be more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us; and our language shall be, while we, like them, are clothed in white robes, and carry, as they do, the palms of exulting triumph in their hands, "Now thanks be to God which has given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. We are taught to compute the gain or the loss which must follow from our own decision. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

My brethren, our Lord does not answer the question; but leaves it to press on our conscience with its own proper and mighty force. So obvious is the answer, that to expand it were to weaken the impressiveness of the question itself. A few rapid glances of thought will supply the whole. Glance from the smile of the world, to the frown of God; glance from the pleasures of the world, to the pains of perdition; glance from the gains of the world, to the loss of heaven; glance from the momentary enjoyments of time, however heightened, to the endless remorses of eternity; and you feel at once, that, were it possible to gain the world, if by that gain we occasioned the loss of the soul, not only has an act of the most infatuated blindness been committed, but, as well, the most cruel act of self destruction.

But O, the gain of godliness! Though a man should lose his life for Christ, he finds it in the spiritual life which shall feed all the strength of holiness, and all the joy of salvation for ever. He finds it in the communion of deathless saints, in the noblest employments, in the elevations of intellect, in the exercise of the sweetest affections, and, above all, in and with God, who is the fountain of life and blessedness for evermore. Make these your choice. Consider, O thoughtless man, what you have hitherto hazarded, and hazard the soul no longer. You have been living on the very brink of all these miseries, and your

lusts and passions, aided by Satan, have been alluring you to take one step more, the last, the fatal step. Awake! before thou art plunged headlong down. Now call upon thy Deliverer, whose hand has hitherto kept thee from falling thus irrecoverably. Flee from ruin; nor stop till thou art received into that refuge where thine eternal interests shall be secured. In this work of saving the soul, let none rest till heaven itself shall open its gates, and then shall you find your full, infinite gain, in the safety and blessedness of your souls for ever.

Sermon XLVIII.—*The Life of Faith.*

"And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Galatians ii, 20.

The admiration of greatness of character is a natural sentiment; and one of the most interesting of intellectual exercises, is that by which we investigate the principles which are developed in those distinguishing peculiarities which that greatness presents. Eminent examples of piety in the Church may attract the attention of the philosophers of this world. They may admire, but they cannot love, them. They may investigate, but they cannot understand, them. The secret springs of true devotedness to God are such as to elude all the pryings of the philosophy of man; and thus does it hold good in all ages, that "he that is spiritual is judged of no man."

It is not for purposes of curiosity, however innocent, that we are to direct our regards to characters like that of St. Paul, and of others whom the sacred record brings before us. To Christians this is a branch of religious duty. The apostle brought the most eminent of the Old Testament saints before the believers of his day, for their imitation; and these, with those whom the New Testament presents, are examples for us. "Be ye not slothful," is the word of exhortation, "but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." But, that we may imitate, we must know, them; and understand the very springs of that character which we are to keep before us as our standard. And for this we must be taught of God. This teaching is as necessary to enable us to understand the examples of Scripture, as to understand its doctrines; and for this Divine wisdom, we must ask of God.

But in what respects are these holy men of God our examples? Not, certainly, in their gifts; not in the offices they filled; not in any thing which was special and peculiar to themselves, but in those things common to them and the whole Church; in faith, in love, in obedience. In their characters the doctrine of Christ is embodied; and the written law is seen living, speaking, and acting.

The example of St. Paul is now before us. We find him here, glorifying the great doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to Jews and Judaizing Christians, and adverting to his own state in reference to it. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God." And what this living to God is, he tells us in the text.

Regarding him as our example, we have to consider,

I. The life which he lived in the flesh.

II. Its principle and source, faith in the Son of God.

I. The life which the apostle lived in the flesh.

In directing our attention, not indeed so much to the public life of St. Paul, but to what may be termed his Christian life, we shall find it marked by a great variety of excellencies; more, indeed, than our limited time will now permit us to examine; but we may select a few, as illustrative of the whole.

1. His whole life was a life of religious decision.

He made his choice, and never faltered in it. He was put to a severe test at first, but his decision is strikingly expressed by himself: "I conferred not," says he, "with flesh and blood." He conferred not with his own natural feelings; not with his friends; not with the world. He saw what he had to do, and he began to do it at once. He allowed no parley with the enemy. Nor was this resolution fleeting: it continued through life. At the very first he "suffered the loss of all things;" and after many years of toil and suffering his language was still the same: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chist Jesus my Lord." His example, in this respect, I propose to you. Are you convinced that you should give up all for Christ? Confer not with flesh and blood. Resolve at once. Keep up this spirit, and you are safe.

2. His life was marked by a solemn regard and care for his own personal salvation.

There are two sources of religious danger of which we are not always sufficiently aware; zeal for doctrinal truth, and active employment in promoting the spread of truth. Both these are important duties; and yet how possible it is, that, through the treachery of our own hearts, even these may be allowed insensibly to sap the very foundations of that solemn fear, as to our own selves, which ought to influence us. To both these duties St. Paul attended. It was his office to establish and defend the entire truth of God,—and very zealously did he labour for this,—and to extend the kingdom of Christ in the world. But, in the midst of all, he never lost sight of his own salvation. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Here, too, you are called to follow him. Had you once impressive views of spiritual danger? Have you them now? The prize is not won. You are still "so to run that you may obtain." Is the victory already gained? If it is, why then are we still called to "put on the whole armour of God," that so we "may withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand?" Remember, that truth is not the substance of salvation, but its instrument. Water others, but neglect not your own vineyard.

3. The life which St. Paul lived in the flesh was truly a life of devotion.

His was a life of prayer. Philosophy asks a reason for the efficacy of prayer; and, waiting for an answer, never prays at all. Religion hears that God will be inquired of by us, thankfully bends the knee, touches the golden sceptre, and bears away the blessing. If St. Paul enjoined on others to pray without ceasing, he practised this himself;

and only in one instance is the importance, the absolute necessity, of prayer, more strongly marked than in him. In him it is very strongly marked. He had the highest qualifications, both natural and inspired, for his work; but he leaned not on them. He looks to the power of God, prays for himself, and says to others, "Brethren, pray for us." Even this gives a mighty sanction to the principle: but it possesses one yet mightier; for Christ, who had taken on him the form of a servant, Christ was not only a man of sorrows, but a man of prayer.

Into the very spirit of this St. Paul entered, and we must follow. We always want; we must always pray. And wish we for a model of high aspiration in prayer? Let the apostle elevate and expand our languid desires. Behold him, "having boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Christ," "bowing his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus," and seeking for his Christian brethren, that they "might be strengthened with might by the Spirit in their inner man;" that "Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith;" that they "might be rooted and grounded in love;" "enabled to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with the fulness of God."

4. The apostle's life was one of heavenly mindedness.

He lived, indeed, in the flesh, but his life was in heaven. This is a feature very strongly marked in his character. How often does he refer to the day of Christ! How often he speaks of Christ's appearing! And thus does he characterize true Christians, that they love his appearing. Sweetly he struggles between two, "desiring to depart and be with Christ." My brethren, what is the secret of all this? And the secret, too, of the contrary fears? Heavenly mindedness is the result of three things,—of an assurance of present acceptance with God, habitual intercourse with him through his Son, and the extinction of the worldly spirit: our fears and aversions result from principles directly opposite. You are called to live St. Paul's life in this respect; but it is only by the use of the same means that you can attain to it. See the picture of this man of upward tendency, and let it animate you to follow his example. He is willing to "suffer the loss of all things that he may win Christ, and be found in him;" "that he may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings," "that he may attain to the resurrection of the dead."

5. The life of St. Paul was one of cheerful submission to providential appointments.

His was no life of envied ease, when he could say, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." In every city, bonds and afflictions awaited him, and he was "in deaths often." You are to view these painful dispensations as operating on a tender and delicate mind; for in him were united great energy and great tenderness. To his sorrowing friends he could say, "What mean ye, to weep and to break my heart?" And yet he withstood all their persuasions, declaring himself "ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." Yet this man, thus hunted like a beast of prey, always preserves and exhibits a contented cheerfulness. He had learned, in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. He could say, "If I be offered upon

the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me." Here is no sorrow for himself; none allowed to others for him. The principle itself, reason could not furnish; but, when furnished, it is seen to be most reasonable. Well may we be required to cast all our care upon God, when we are assured that he, the Almighty, the merciful, the wise, the faithful,—that he "careth for us."

6. The apostle's life was one of laborious usefulness.

We enter not now into the consideration of his official character, as an apostle; though in this, all Christian ministers may see their perfect model; but, viewing his character more generally, we perceive in him that effect which Christianity ought to produce in us all, in a most marked and eminent degree. He lived, not to himself, but to Christ his Lord, in the promotion of his will in the moral benefit and eternal salvation of men. This was the life he lived in the flesh, even to spread the light and influence of the Gospel to all.

II. Of this life, the great principle was, faith in the Son of God.

1. It is Christian faith. Its object, the Son of God. It receives his words as true, and regards him as an atoning sacrifice: "He gave himself for me."

2. In its nature, it is confiding and appropriating: "He loved *me*; he gave himself for *me*."

How, then, does faith connect itself with the results we have stated?

1. It regenerates as well as justifies.

2. It produces vital union with Christ. All who believe are "in Christ;" and union in Christ secures to the soul a participation of the Divine nature. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

3. It is habitual in its exercise, and thus is a constant going out from our own weakness, a taking hold of the strength of God, pleading and obtaining the promises.

4. And it is realizing. It gives a spiritual apprehension of invisible and eternal realities. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

SERMON XLIX.—*The Gospel of the Kingdom.*

"And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," Matthew xxiv, 14.

THE text stands in that well-known portion of the ministry of our Lord's life, in which, in the exercise of his prophetic spirit, he throws aside the veil of the future, and presents the awful picture, first, of the destruction of the Jewish polity; and, secondly, the more awful and wide-spread ruin of our world itself. This series of predictions affords an instance of what has been called, somewhat improperly, "the double sense of prophecy." The meaning of the expression is, that prophecy has often a double, and sometimes a three-fold application. It applies to lower and higher events; to what is proximate, and what is remote; and, by a Divine skill, and nice selection of circumstances, one is made

illustrative of the other. Thus, as Lord Bacon beautifully observes, prophecy has often a germinant accomplishment. Like the root, it puts forth the blade, the stem, the perfect ear; and by different gradations ripens into an accomplishment so full, that not one jot or tittle of it pases away.

The meaning of the text, therefore, is two-fold; that the Gospel should be preached throughout the world, the Roman empire; and then shall come the end, the destruction of the Jews as a nation. In the highest and ulterior sense, the text means, that the Gospel shall be preached to all nations upon earth, as a witness of God's mercy to them, and as a witness against them that disobey; and then shall the end come, the termination of the plans of God's moral government as to this lower world.

The phrase, "the kingdom," under which Jesus most commonly represents the dispensation of Christianity, and the idea of *rule* which it conveys, exactly accords with all those views of it which were presented to the ancient saints in the prophetic writings. The very first promise includes the idea: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The same remark will apply to several prophecies of the Old Testament. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix, 10. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," Psalm ii, 6. The Jews were therefore correct in expecting a ruling Messias. So far they rightly interpreted the prophets; but as to the nature of that rule, they fell into a fatal error. In their view his was to be an earthly monarchy; in the intention of God it was to be a spiritual one. Thus they abased, while they intended to exalt, his royal claims. For had he taken possession of a palace, surrounding himself with the splendours of earthly courts, and pushed his conquests over the Gentile nations, how poor a sovereignty would this have been, in comparison of that which he has actually established, and is conducting to completion! To nobler views the people were directed by Christ, when he spoke of his kingdom as "the kingdom of heaven." The whole Gospel is a commentary on that phrase. The means and ends of his kingdom are spiritual. The work of Christ, since his ascension, is a commentary upon the Gospel. He has been employed in subduing the hearts of men; and his kingdom is that moral control under which he brings every saved individual, and will ultimately bring the whole world.

Our text will lead us to consider,

I. The nature and extent of that rule which is implied in the phrase used to characterize Christianity, "the kingdom."

The kingdom of Christ is,

1. Rule over religious opinion.

Man is fond of constructing religious theories, altering and combining the principles and details of different systems; but Christianity supplies a revelation from God. This is to be read and studied with care; its plain and connected sense is to be obtained, and then fully admitted. No license is given in regard to admitting the revelation of God. The rule is strict and absolute: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

2. Rule over the choice of the will.

The will is left free, though it is assisted by the Holy Spirit in choosing that which is good. We cannot exercise our freedom as we like with impunity. Good and evil are set before us; and we are peremptorily required to refuse the evil, and choose the good. The rule of choice is laid down, and no deviations from it are allowed.

3. The rule of Christ marks and determines the only method in which the guilty may be forgiven and accepted by God.

We may, as others have done, speculate on this and the other answer to the question, "How shall man be just with God?" But this is a matter which God himself has settled. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

4. The rule of Christ is rule over the exercise of the affections of the heart.

All these may be summed up in love. But we are not at liberty to love what we please; nor even to love that which is lawful in an inordinate degree. The rule of Christ comes in at once to specify the object, and the degree in which it is to be loved. The supreme object of love is God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." "Love not the world, nor the things of the world."

5. Rule over the tempers.

We are expressly commanded to forgive our enemies, on pain of not being ourselves forgiven by God; and all Christians are directed to "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

6. It is a rule over the conduct in all the relations of life.

Kings are to be just, ruling in the fear of God; not a terror to good works, but to evil. Subjects are to obey, not for wrath, but for conscience' sake. Masters are to give unto their servants that which is just and equal; and servants are to discharge the duties of their station, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart to the Lord. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church; and the wife is to reverence her husband, as the head. Parents are to bring up their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord; and children are to obey their parents in all things. In all their intercourse with each other, men are directed to do unto others, as they would others should do unto them.

This exposition of the nature and extent of Christ's kingdom may at first sight appear harsh and repulsive. We are impatient of restraints. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," is the proud language of every rebel, when he finds that God hath set his King upon the holy hill of Zion, and commands obedience.—But on the other hand, we have the authority of the text for showing you that the mercy and tenderness of the kingdom lie precisely in its authority; and that without this, it could not be even "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Hence, the benevolence of this system of moral rule is,

II. Most forcibly marked by the very phase of the text, "the Gospel," the good news, the glad tidings, "of the kingdom." The declaration that God hath set up such a kingdom is goodness to men; tidings in which they have not only a deep but a joyful interest. Attend then to the proof of this important point. We said,

1. That the rule of Christ is rule over religious opinion. Mark the benevolence of that.

Religion is built upon knowledge; but there is no certainty in that kind of knowledge, but the authority of God. He knows infallibly what is injurious to us, and what is conducive to our happiness and to his glory; and he has told us what he knows. He has revealed the truth of things; and by a cordial belief of his revelation, we escape a bewildered state of mind, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

2. We have said that this rule lays the will under restraint. Here is another display of benevolence. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good."

We had not otherwise known either good or evil precisely. Were we travelling in a foreign country, the very fruits of which were unknown to us; suppose some were poisonous, and some good for food; and often that which was the most sightly and inviting to the eye was the most injurious; should we deem it any thing but an act of kindness in some inhabitant of the country to instruct us in the difference, and thus guard us from danger, and minister to our security and enjoyment? God has done this for us. He hath in his word written on every thing about us, "This is good," or, "This is evil." And when he enjoins us to choose life, his authority is mercy: that rule is the tenderest love.

3. The rule determines the only method of salvation; and see we not the goodness of this?

Behold, as an illustration, the various means adopted when man is left to himself. Contemplate the sanguinary rites of heathenism, and the empty ceremonies of superstitious Christians. These are all vanity. They cannot give the labouring conscience peace, nor wash away a single stain of guilt from the human mind. But God hath provided the Lamb for a burnt offering, and shown us what he has provided. God hath exhibited Christ to our view. "Him hath God the Father sealed," and exalted; so that here there shall be no disappointment. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." That problem, which we could never have determined, is settled by the wisdom of God, how God could be just, and at the same time justify the ungodly and the sinner.

4. The rule of Christ controls the affections. In this the goodness and mercy of the Gospel are seen.

Strong powers, if misdirected, are destructive; and to place the affections of men under due restraint, is a preventive of evil to an unlimited extent. Beside, man is not self sufficient; but always goes out of himself for happiness. If he set his affections upon earthly things, he only goes to broken cisterns to quench his thirst. By claiming our affections, God brings us to himself, the fountain of living waters. We also acquire a likeness to what we love; for there is a power of assimilation in our nature. If we love the trifles of earth, we become like them: if we love God, we rise into his image, "from glory into glory,

even as by the Spirit of the Lord." To be restrained, therefore, from the love of earthly things, and to give our affections to God, is essential to our happiness; and the rule which binds us to this, is therefore an expression of the infinite goodness of God, and of his most compassionate regard for our welfare.

5. It is equally an act of mercy to place the tempers of men under restraint.

All evil tempers are a source of misery. Pride, anger, malice, never fail to produce wretchedness wherever they are indulged. Happiness consists in the cultivation of the opposite graces, enjoined by Christianity; such as meekness, humility, and benevolence.

6. In regard to the outward conduct, if the rule of Christ were established, the happiness of the world would be secured.

There would be no need of new theories of morals. Only apply its principles upon a large scale, to government, commerce, and all the civil and domestic relations of life, and you have peace upon earth, and universal good will to man.

The text directs our attention,

III. To the final issues of that scheme of moral government which is founded upon our redemption. The Gospel shall be preached unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

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SERMON L.—*Emmanuel, God with Us.*

"And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us," Matthew i, 23.

NAMES, in Scripture, are often given, not for the mere distinguishing of persons, but for much higher purposes. Sometimes they are historical, as that of Adam, which recorded that he was formed of the earth; sometimes gratefully commemorative, as Moses, drawn out of the water; sometimes characteristic, as Melchizedek, king of righteousness; sometimes prophetic, as Abraham, a father of many nations. Such names were designed to have a religious use. In the form of brief prophecies, they kept great events before the mind; or, as records of Divine mercies, they awakened and sustained gratitude. In the case of Adam, the name was designed to produce and strengthen feelings of humility by reminding even the first man of his origin, and reminding his descendants that as they are dust, so to dust shall they return. As they were descriptive of character and office, the individual himself was called to remember his duty; and others, his Divine designation to it.

The names of our Lord are thus names of religious instruction.—Some are names of prophecy; some of office; and some, like that in the text, at once teach us his condescension and love, and open before us a wide and glorious scene as to the design and purposes of his coming. As Emmanuel, he was the subject of prophecy; and, when he actually came in our nature, he was, what his name imported, Emmanuel, God with us.

My object shall be to show you that since Christ came in the flesh, bearing the title Emmanuel, God with us, we have stronger and clearer demonstration of the great and affecting truth which the name implies, as well as brighter illustrations of the fact.

I. We know, in consequence of the revelations made by Christ, that God is so with us, so near to us, that our very existence is every moment upheld by him.

This would be a great truth, even philosophically considered, overturning, as it does, the schemes of the "minute philosophers" of the world, and introducing us to far nobler views. We exist not by chance, or by some blind influence of the laws of nature; but whatever subordinate causes may be employed, they all derive their efficacy from Him. He lives and moves through every link of the whole chain. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Now, see the grand theological truth which is thus opened to us, even this, that we may "feel after him, and find him, who is not far from every one of us." For this he made us; for this he is with us to sustain and preserve us. This is the gracious end exhibited in the Gospel. None of you are made that you might perish. His design is to bring you back to himself.

II. We know, too, from the incarnation and doctrine of Christ, that God is with us, not as individuals merely, but with our world, and that, also, in the way of special grace.

Here, too, how much is the cause of true philosophy served. We see our God upholding all things as he had created all; "measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand, meting out heaven with a span, comprehending the dust of the earth in a measure, weighing the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." What sublimity and glory have we even here! But this is the lowest view. He is in the world, not to exhibit his power merely, but that the world of men may be redeemed. Earth is a theatre in which souls are trained up for heaven. The Mediator bears rule, and the saving work goes on. Angels in heaven rejoice in what they see; and yet the plan is only developing itself, and can be, at present, only partially known. We are not to judge from clouds and dark seasons. We have the assurance that to the progress of this great work, all things are made subservient. Salvation shall triumph, the kingdom of peace and love shall come, and all his "saints shall bless him, speaking of the glory of his kingdom, and talking of his power." God is often near to us in judgment, but he is always near to us in mercy.

III. But we must approach greater mysteries of love. In Christ we see that God was with us, in our very nature, to accomplish our redemption.

It was not sufficient to meet our case that he should be with us only as we have already stated. It was necessary that he should be with us as one of us, partaker of our nature, to be, and to be reckoned, a man. And thus it was. He was born of a woman, had his name in Cesar's enrolment, was of the seed of Abraham, and of the house and lineage of David.

All this, we have said, was to meet our case. Let us examine this point.

Man was to be taught the things belonging to his peace. No mere

prophet sufficed for the full disclosure of truth; no types or shadowy representations could supply the needful instruction. God himself must follow his erring creature, and say, "Come, and let us reason together." By personal converse, his prejudices were to be dissipated, and the truth presented in a simplicity in which only the God of truth could array it, because only by himself could the whole mighty thought be conceived. But shall God himself speak to man? Surely not from his glory. That had once been tried; and the consequence was that the people "said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Frail and guilty humanity sought to shelter itself behind man from the piercing voice of God. But under the new dispensation God must speak with man. The necessity of the case, and the perfection of the dispensation itself, both require it. See, then, the difficulty met and overcome. He becomes man, hides the glory of the Godhead in the shrine of his humanity; and now he speaks,—O mystery of wisdom and love!—as God, and as man; speaks as no man could have spoken; speaks with light, and majesty, and perfection, with authority and sweetness; and yet speaks as only God in the form of a servant could have spoken.

Then, man was to be made to know what the holiness of God is. And that for two ends, that he might loathe himself as a sinner, and so love holiness as to seek it with his whole heart. For this a perfect, living rule was needed. But the Invisible he could not see; nor, seeing, live. Other manifestations of holiness are afforded, both grand and impressive; but they are still imperfect, as to a fallen creature. The law has a verbal manifestation; and yet man sees it but dimly. Corrections have a voice; but he hears it not. Here, in the Word made flesh, the holiness lives, breathes, acts; and all this in human virtues, heightened by a Divine perfection, without losing their character. Trying ourselves by "the mind which was in Christ," we see and loathe ourselves. We see and love what we are not. We gaze on the perfect Exemplar, and desire and labour to be like him.

Man needed redemption; but, while under guilt, the law held him fast. A debt had been contracted; and nothing could meet the demand but death. But if man were to be delivered over, unredeemed, to death, why this teaching of truth? why this exhibition of holiness? O, for this he became man, that by dying he might save us; God with us, one of us, that he might represent us; and, adding his own infinite dignity to his human sufferings, he took the bond, and cancelled the debt of death by dying. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same, and was, for the suffering of death, made a little lower than the angels, that he might, by the grace of God, taste death for every man.

IV. We are farther assured of another truth, that, though ascended into heaven, he is still "God with us," with us by the invisible, but mighty, influence which he exerts.

And here another glory of our religion opens upon us. He carries his great redemption into effect by himself, by his own power. He is God with us, so as to be in us. Are we dark? He shines on our spirit in the light of his own truth, searching and quickening. Impenitent? He takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh. It is under his influence that man weeps for sin. Self sufficient? He

makes us know and feel that his strength alone excites the effort to lay hold of mercy, and then meets it, and makes it successful. It is he who makes the impression of favour and love in the heart, and opens there, for the first time, the spring of true comfort and peace. He finds man a slave; but he leads him into liberty, giving him the necks of his enemies. He sees him sunk on earth; and he brings him to communion with all holy and heavenly subjects, grants him fellowship with God, and enables him, even while on earth, to walk as in heavenly places.

V. We are thus reminded, too, that God is with us, in condescension and special grace, during the whole course of discipline to which he subjects us.

God with man! with ourselves! How inspiring the doctrine! Art thou a pilgrim, walking in perplexed ways? He is thy guide. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Thou art a creature of affliction and sorrow. He is with thee as thou passest through the water, and through the fire. "Call upon him in the day of trouble; he shall deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify him." Thou art tempted. But he is thy shield and thy strong tower. "In that he suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Dost thou feel thine own littleness and insignificance? Thy God thinketh upon thee. "The hairs of your head are all numbered." "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." Thou mayest be little and unknown among men, but a precious diadem in the hand of thy God. "He is nigh unto thee in all that thou callest on him for." Various and changing may be the scenes through which thou passest. But all shall be tempered by his wisdom for thine own advantage. "All things work together for good unto them that love him." Thou shalt die. But when thou walkest in the valley and shadow of death, he shall be with thee. Thou shalt moulder in the dust. But thy "flesh also shall rest in hope;" for "in his book all thy members are written." And while adoring "Him that sitteth upon the throne," and "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne," God with us shall be the burden of thy song for ever.

Is Christ our Emmanuel? God with us? Then let us take care that we are with him;—coming to him habitually in acts of faith and love;—walking with him, and before him;—so shall he to us be all and in all, the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

Sermon LI.—*The Abolition of Satan's Dominion.*

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Hebrews ii, 14, 15.

This whole chapter contains the most affecting views, of which Christ is the chief subject. He is represented to us as being "crowned with glory and honour," so that "all things are put under him." A

being so exalted, and capable of so wide a government, must be more than a mere creature. And thus is he described in the first chapter as "God," whose "throne is for ever and ever," the "brightness" of the Divine "glory." Yet, though thus glorious and exalted in himself, he was made for a little while "lower than the angels," a man, one of ourselves, partaker of flesh and blood. Do we ask, "Why?" It was "for the suffering of death," that he might thus rescue us both from the fear of death, and from death itself. And in this was there special favour. It was "by the grace of God," that he thus "tasted death for every man." Mysteriously to us, he left the angels who fell to die for ever. He took not their nature, but condescended to redeem man. "The children," still regarded as such, though rebellious, guilty, and ruined, "the children were partakers of flesh and blood;" and therefore "he also himself likewise took part of the same," that man's enemies might be subdued, and himself rescued and saved.

On this passage we propose to make a few explanatory observations.

I. We learn that the incarnation placed our Lord in the precise condition of all other human beings, as to the nature which he assumed.

The children were "partakers of flesh and blood," and "he himself likewise took part of the same." They were human beings; and he condescended to become one with them. Yet, though he assumed human nature, it was not human nature in its originally perfect state. That, no doubt, was great and glorious. Beauty, strength, and majesty would be found in unsinning and immortal man. The assumption of our nature, even thus considered, would have been an amazing stoop of condescension and love; but he was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh;" in the likeness of man, as he is in his sinful and therefore humbled condition. He was subjected, therefore, to all its sinless infirmities and pains; nor does the personal union of the Divinity with his lower nature appear to have exempted him in the least degree from any species of suffering. He was to be "made perfect,"—a perfect Saviour,—"through sufferings;" and therefore they were laid upon him. We must here, however, notice, that though Christ was perfect man, yet there were two peculiarities which distinguished him from all other men.

1. He had no original pollution.

He was made, it is significantly said, in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in flesh actually sinful. To show that he escaped the original taint, he was not born in the ordinary way. All others are by their birth connected with the first man; but this connecting chain was in his case broken. His body was not formed by natural generation, but by creation in the womb of the virgin. Thus was he sinless, not in act only, but in his very nature. What could be said of no other could thus be said of this fruit of the virgin: "That holy thing which was born of thee." In him there was no seed of evil; by him was no spiritual regeneration needed.

2. He was not only sinless and unsinning, but incapable of sinning.

This did not arise merely from his being born pure and holy. Adam was a man. He was flesh, but not sinful flesh. He was created a holy thing too, but capable of sinning. But in Christ the Divinity was impersonated, even that nature which "cannot be tempted of evil." Hence, though he was tempted by Satan, (to whom, probably, the

mystery of the incarnation was unknown) he remained "without sin;" "that wicked one touched him not." To have stooped to an alliance with a sinful nature had not been condescension, but moral degradation; of which God is incapable. The condescension of the incarnation was one consistent with Divine dignity and glory: a wonderful condescension to weakness, and shame, and pain, and death. It was a hiding of the Divine glory within the veil of the earthly, feeble tabernacle of frail and suffering humanity.

II. We are taught in the text that our redemption was accomplished through the death of the incarnate Saviour.

Every thing we have said of the person of Christ has an intimate relation to that great event, his death. As he was to deliver man, not angels, he became not an angel, but a man. As he was to suffer and die, he assumed human nature in its feebleness and humility, not in its glory and strength. That he was undefiled man referred to this. This was represented by the ancient sacrifices, which were to be without spot inwardly as well as outwardly. For this cause were they so carefully examined by the priests. And as he was typified by these sacrifices, so was his death sacrificial. He died in the place of man, for whom he was offered. To this, likewise, referred the union of the Divine and human natures in one person; thus giving to his sufferings and death a boundless merit, and constituting his sacrifice the immense price of our redemption. This is the great conclusion to which we are conducted in another part of this epistle: "And for this cause," or on this account, because his blood was so efficacious, as stated in the preceding verse, "he is the Mediator of the new testament," or covenant, standing between God and us to make peace, "that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions," or transgressors, "under the first testament," or covenant, or law, "they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," Hebrews ix, 15. O what views are here! Here is a covenant of mercy,—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,"—ratified by "the precious blood of Christ." He is the Mediator to execute it, that so we may be saved from the death to which the first covenant dooms us. To accomplish this work, he redeemed us, purchased us out of the hands of rigid justice, and inflexible law, and obtained the power to save us from sin and Satan, death and hell, and to give us the promise of an eternal inheritance of life and glory.

The text goes on to fix our attention upon two of the parts of this glorious redemption. We have it, therefore, stated,

III. That the death of Christ, as to all that believe in him, abolishes the dominion of Satan. "That through death he might destroy," take away the power from, "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Satan is said to have the power of death for various reasons.

1. As he has the power to tempt to sin, the effect of which is death. So, when he had prevailed against our first parents, and sin had entered the world, then death came by sin.

> "Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of wo,
> That all was lost."

Paradise withered. The concord among the creatures was dissolved. Man, immortal man, began to die, and every moment approached nearer to death. Abel's blood soon stained the earth. Cain, the murderer, a vagabond on the face of the earth, wandered in fear of being slain. Even the long lives of the antediluvians were soon shortened, and men were left to complain that the days of their age were but three-score and ten years; nor was even that attained but by few.—Death by sin! Witness the tears of Rachel, weeping in every age over blighted infancy; and David, exclaiming, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" Wide is the reign of death, because wide is the reign of sin. These must co-extend. Where there is no sin, there is no death; but where there is sin, there death tracks the step of the transgressor. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

2. The devil is said to have the power of death, as though he were the prince of death, and the scenes of death were his territory.

Such is the fact. He is called "the god of this world," which is the region and shadow of death. Countless myriads who once trod its soil have entered the vast sepulchre, to which all are still hasting.—The dreariest and most deathlike regions of the earth would seem to be most pleasing to him. The men possessed by demons had their abode among the tombs. The unclean spirit is represented as going out into dry or solitary places. It is as though the prince and lord of death most felt his power, and there was most pleased, so far as malignity can be pleased, when he could feed on the recollections of successful malice, amidst the solitudes of ancient states, where once all was life; the still ruins of pompous cities, where every echo whispers death; and the wide and full burial grounds, where every breeze savours of mortality.

3. He has the power of death, because, although he can do nothing unless, in judgment, he is permitted, yet, when permission is given, he has power over the agents which produce disease and death.

Thus he smote the house of Job, and slew his children; and thus he smote Job himself with disease. So, by plunging men in sin, he brings on disease, and death in its most horrid forms. So, by kindling malice and revenge, he instigates men, as he instigated Cain, to murder their fellows. So, when allowed, he kindles the passion for war, and men, like fiends, (and often under fiendish inspiration,) riot in each other's blood. In this sense does he go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: "a murderer," as he has been "from the beginning."

4. But he has the power of death in another sense, as spreading its terrors before the imagination.

There is here, perhaps, an allusion to the superstitious fears of death prevalent among the Jews. Few people more than they have indulged terrific notions on this subject: such as their figments of the angel of death, and the beatings which the dead received in their grave; a sort of horrible consciousness still remaining with them. Now, these terrible imaginings were his work; and they show how he delights in aggravating human misery. And so as to the common fears of death which are excited. And he exults in this effect, from the ordinary dread which draws a pall over the gayest scenes, to the shivering terrors of the conscience-stricken wretch, in the agonies of nature's dissolution

Thus has he the power of death: but, as to them that believe, that dominion is abolished. As to the believer, death, though it remains, is no longer penal. To him it is a mercy, whenever it takes place. If he lives, he lives to the Lord; and if he dies, he dies to the Lord, and so is the malice of Satan disappointed: the Christian dies that he may live for ever and ever. Nor can Satan slay the believer. He was permitted to smite Job, but that was all. When the excommunicated man is said to be given over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, the very expression proves that the lives of saints are not in his hand. To these, life and death are both in the covenant. The times of saints are in the hand of their Lord. Satan has no power of death in this respect. And they shall rise again. His power over the grave is broken, and the keys are in higher hands.

Then there is deliverance from the fear of death. Death itself must be undergone by the believer, yet, from the fear of death, and its distressing bondage, he is mercifully saved. Under that bondage men habitually dwell. The people of God thank him who giveth them the victory through their Lord and Saviour. There is no fear of the consequences, from which comes the deepest sting. A natural shrinking there may be; but this is relieved by the promise, "As thy day," thy dying day, "so shall be thy strength." No enslaving fear as to the effect of our loss on others is allowed to becloud our mind. "Leave thy fatherless children to me," it is said; and to Him we commit them in tranquil confidence. God gives us the victory; so that if "some natural tears we shed, we dry them soon," and in calm and holy triumph enter into the pure regions of bliss and immortality.

1. Remember, this deliverance is only yours if you seek for it.—Otherwise, all the weight of evil remains on you. The impenitent, the unregenerate, die in misery, and perish without hope.

2. The true means of casting out this fear is faith, realizing faith. Cultivate this. Especially faith in the blood of atonement, in the gracious and unchangeable power of Christ, and in the blessed realities of the heavenly world.

3. Be preparing for your final victory. The last hour is approaching. Every moment brings it nearer. Gird on your armour, and keep it ever bright.

4. Give thanks to your great Deliverer. That he, "the everlasting Son of the Father," should have remembered us in our low estate, will be matter of endless praise. Begin the blessed work on earth.

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